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illustration：lack
呼び出された殺戮者
Summoned Slaughter Ⅳ

Summoned Slaughterer
(呼び出された殺戮者)
Volume 04
What you need in war is money

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Story Description:

Touno Hifumi was summoned

to another world, to be a Hero for a kingdom. Unbeknownst to the summoners, he's a kill-happy person who restrained his killer instincts with martial arts. Upon arrival he slaughter various knights and the mastermind of the event, the King. Unwilling to oppose this strong killer, the Princess let him go free. Thus start the fun life of travelling the world, unrestraintly killing any who attempt to kill him.

But first, lets purchase a pair of female slaves.

Original Story can be found here:
Link

Chapter 27: This Is War

Because Hifumi's expeditionary force had to replenish their supplies at Fokalore, they used the time to spend a night there. Deep in the night a group of about 20 people secretly left the city.

It was the third unit led by Alyssa.

For the sake of an advance mission, they went ahead and moved towards the national border.

"So, the reason is to kill the careless border company under cover of the night." (Hifumi)

For some reason the commander of the forces, Hifumi, was running as vanguard ahead of the third unit.

“I think usually you would wait with starting until both sides gathered their troops, but ...” (Alyssa)

The one following right behind Hifumi was Alyssa.

Moreover, three rows side-by-side consisting of the 21 troops of the third unit came after them.

Including them, all of the expeditionary force were given orders by Hifumi to act in three-man-cells.

“Discard the usual way of thinking. It’s not like we have to particularly watch out for some promise. No

matter what you do while at war, the victorious side is justified. Don't forget that the losing side has to yield everything to the winner." (Hifumi)

"I-I'm sorry ..." (Alyssa)

Aiming to suppress any sound, all of them were walking.

Hifumi wore something similar to order-made zouri[1] produced in this world as footwear. For all of the others he came up with the ingenious idea to attach cotton to the shoe sole of their boots in order to restrain the sound of foot steps.

Even so, although the foot steps of the troops were audible in their own way, Hifumi's practically

couldn't be heard.

"Everybody, listen." (Hifumi)

Inserting a break during the walking, they had only half of the way left before arriving at the national border as dawn was closing in.

Everyone was breathing heavily. Only Hifumi was lightly breathing and remained calm.

"After this we will extinguish Vichy's war potential until dawn breaks. Before you are noticed by the enemy, kill them swiftly and in a reliable way. Everybody, take out your knives." (Hifumi)

Without hesitation all troops followed the order and pulled out

their knives from their waist.

The backhand grip of the knives was a custom made article and had a single edge which was new to this world.

Of course, Alyssa took out the same as well.

“Just as you were taught. Predict the visual field of your opponent. Only aim at the throat. Don’t make any sound. Don’t raise your voice.” (Hifumi)

While speaking Hifumi raised for each point a finger. Everyone nodded in silence.

“You were told the strategy before departure, there won’t be any changes. Go!” (Hifumi)

Without using any light, they vanished in turn, 3 soldiers each, in the direction of the border.

“I am off.” (Hifumi)

After making sure everyone left, Hifumi took Alyssa and went towards the border.

Different from the other troops, he boldly charged in from the front.

At the border fortress, there was a pathway going through on the Orsongrande’s side. Two soldiers were standing guard. The shining of the flickering and swaying torchlight could be seen.

Perhaps the rumors about going to war had already reached up to here. While paying undue amount of

attention to the boundary to the Vichy side, they appeared to be quite tense.

There was no particular movement on the other side. The previously passing troops obviously had crossed the border without being noticed.

“Good work.” (Hifumi)

When they were suddenly greeted, they couldn’t help it but turn around.

In front of their eyes, Alyssa led by Hifumi appeared without holding any kind of light source.

“In the dead of the night … ?” (Soldier A)

“Maa, there are some circumstances.” (Hifumi)

With these words, Hifumi took out the passport and showed it to them.

It was a new document specifying him to be treated as viscount.

“This is ... ! Excuse our impoliteness!” (Soldier A)

Straightening up his back, the soldier apologized. Hifumi lightly waved his hands in response.

“Don’t mind it. By the way, it looks like there is only two of you here, however, is it the same over there too?” (Hifumi)

Hifumi rose his finger pointing at the side of Vichy’s on the other side

of the passage through the fortress.

“Huh? Yes, I heard that it is the custom for both countries to place a couple of guards at night-time.” (Soldier A, formal tone)

Given that the border was basically closed during the night, apparently the number of soldiers stationed was at its minimum.

“Is that so? Alyssa, I will take both of them down.” (Hifumi)

“Understood” (Alyssa)

Being doubtful of Hifumi’s and Alyssa’s conversation, the soldiers gave each other a sidelong glance. Steadily they were approaching Vichy’s side.

Before anyone noticed, there was a katana hanging on Hifumi's waist.

"N? At such late time, who is it?" (Vichy Soldier A)

When the Vichy soldier turned around, his head was separated from his torso.

"If asked by anyone, currently I am an invader." (Hifumi)

Swinging the katana before the other soldier was able to detect the drawing, he was slain before he was able to show any kind of reaction.

The soldiers, who Hifumi's group conversed with in the back of the passage just now, watched with a shocked facial expression.

Looking back, Hifumi stored the katana while laughing.

“From this moment on the war has started. Convey this to everyone trying to cross the border. They should be aware that they will be dragged into it and die, too.” (Hifumi)

While Hifumi was violating the national border at leisure, the soldiers in the barracks on Vichy’s side were killed silently.

The three soldiers patrolling the surrounding of the buildings had their throats sliced open and were abandoned just like that. The remaining soldiers died never waking up from their slumber.

At dawn, when the main part of the expeditionary force arrived at the border, everything was finished. Hifumi was leaning with his back on the border fortress and waited for them. (T/N: Orsongrande side)

The other troops boldly took a nap in the border fortress on Vichy's side.

For the fist time experiencing a night attack, they were uniformly excited about it. Thinking about the influence on the military maneuvers from now on, Hifumi ordered them to get some sleep for now.

Seeing Hifumi's figure, Origa descended from the carriage and came over in a rush.

“Master! There are no particular problems with the main body of the expeditionary force to report!” (Origa)

“Understood. Well then, prepare for the military maneuvers on the Vichy’s side of the border using the barracks as base. I will leave after eating lunch.” (Hifumi)

“As you wish.” (Origa)

Origa hurried back to her original position among the troops. Together with Kasha, they issued instructions to cross the border.

“Now then ... I should take a nap, too, huh?” (Hifumi)

It wasn’t only the troops, Hifumi remembered his inner agitation as

well.

However, different from the soldiers, it wasn't due to the murdering a while ago, but due to the part of the coming battles.

He was preparing himself with the aim to act as violently as his heart desired.

He made a simple plan.

Even if his opponent didn't move as he wanted, in that case he expected it to become interesting and thus came up with a plan that was as simple as possible.

As he was thinking about such things, Pajou approached.

"I wondered whether you couldn't

give me some information on the progress of the war." (Pajou)

"The soldiers of Vichy who were at the border, several tens of them, died. Our side incurred no damage." (Hifumi)

Hifumi answered her question smoothly as she was holding writing materials in her hands.

"I heard they were assaulted at the place they slept, but ..." (Pajou)

"That's the reason why I chose a night attack. Quite obviously." (Hifumi)

Hifumi told her over his shoulder, as a matter of course. Pajou wasn't able to say anything else.

Likely, in the future, I think there will be much more happening in this war that exceeds my own comprehension.

Reacting each and every time will only tire me out. Rather it's better if it's only getting tired as a single mistake by myself can easily end up with me being "disposed."

"... I understand. I will also take a small break." (Pajou)

* * *

It all started in the city near the border, Arosel, with the incident of a single young man visiting the mansion of the city's representative on the last day.

"Is the representative of this city

currently in?” (-)

A man suddenly appearing and without warning asking to be shown to the representative, the female servant got angry dealing with him.

Even under normal circumstances, for the sake of dealing with the document arriving from Orsongrande compelling them to allegiance, it was a strenuous effort to prepare the defense and consider the counter-measurements.

“Do you have an appointment?” (Servant)

At best it is someone without an appointment trying to sell something but still came around, I

guess, the servant arbitrarily decided for herself exposing her displeasure in her words as well.

“Appointment, huh? I sent a letter a few days ago.” (-)

“A letter, huh?” (Servant)

In this world where there were monsters to consider in regards to the transportation network, the sending of letters was limited to only prosperous figures.

If the young man in front of me really is a visitor holding an appointment, I have made a mistake in dealing with him, the servant became anxious, but in reality that wasn’t the case.

“Ah, I asked whether he would

become our companion and fight alongside us in the letter. I came here to listen to the reply to that." (-)

Taking it out from his breast pocket, he showed a document to her. It was unmistakably an officially issued passport from Orsongrande declaring the man in front of her as an Viscount.

"Pl-Please wait a moment, Your Excellency." (Servant)

Due to the totally unforeseen rank of the visitor, the servant shrieked with a shrill and nervous voice while rushing towards the office of the representative.

Hearing the report from her, the

representative and the servants under him prepared in great haste to receive the Viscount.

No matter on what kind of reply he would decide, towards a noble, who didn't take along anyone and came here by himself, the representative judged him to not be hostile and instructed that he should be handled courteously for starters.

In the meanwhile it was confirmed by a thin shaped servant from a distance, that Hifumi was the person, who had kidnapped the previous city representative Ortis and strangled him until fainting in order to obtain information out of him.

In the moment the servant saw his

face, Hifumi turned towards the servant and faced him with a smile. The servant couldn't stop to tremble and had to be taken to the medical office in the end.

Somehow or other Hifumi was invited to the reception room and sat down on the opposite side of a man called Kiyulson, who immediately was inaugurated as city representative after Ortis passed away.

He was a merchant, in the mid-40's, who had worked up his way in a single major company in his entire life.

Behind Kiyulson was standing the female servant who had dealt with Hifumi at the beginning.

Somehow it seemed like she had the position of being his secretary.

“I have heard a little bit of rumor about Hifumi-sama already …” (Kiyulson)

“I don’t need any roundabout greetings. First, let’s hear your answer. Then we can proceed the conversation from there.” (Hifumi)

Being interrupted in his attempt to exchange some modest greetings as opening, Kiyulson’s nose became white.

Although he wasn’t a noble in Vichy, he had often negotiated with nobles coming from foreign countries, including Orsongrande, in the past. Yet he didn’t meet such

a noble until now.

Judging Hifumi's youth, Kiyulson concluded him to be a noble rushing for results due to his scarce experience.

"I am very sorry. Related to the document delivered from Orsongrande, we unfortunately weren't able to carefully examine it yet. Please wait for the reply until then." (Kiyulson)

Towards the harmless and inoffensive reply of not committing himself in any way while at the same time asking him to temporarily return until Kiyulson could come up with his answer, Hifumi laughed scornfully.

“Fu, the local administration here takes it obviously quite easy. The representative was kidnapped and even though questioned whether they want to resist their ruin or join the other side, they weren’t able to come up with a decision on how to deal with it within a few days either.” (Hifumi)

“... I can’t believe this was said by the criminal himself, honestly ... Hey youngster, I think you should behave more modestly even if you are a noble. You do realize that it would be fine to arrest you as a criminal here, right? Since I will close my eyes towards the amount of rudeness you showed here, go back now.” (Kiyulson)

Dealing with Hifumi, Kiyulson’s

look and tone changed.

“I understand that you want to rush the results due to your youth, but you are 10 years too early to stick your nose into the exchanges between nations. In the first place, the documents from Orsongrande are an aberrant threatening letter. Meddling in our national politics just because of some brat who managed to somehow get some military gains due to committing crimes, is this document supposed to be a joke? Looking down on our government will sooner or later cause you a painful experience.” (Kiyulson)

“I see, in other words you don’t intend to accept our demands.” (Hifumi)

“Of course not. Do you think that Orsongrande has the necessary military forces to invade into Vichy? Just considering the financial clout to fund the military forces, there is no way for Orsongrande to win a war in a direct confrontation. That already applies to only this city. We have plenty of defensive forces to deploy.” (Kiyulson)

Apparently Kiyulson had judged Ortis to be the only incompetent person. He didn’t seem to acknowledge the value of Hifumi’s ability overly much either.

Pondering about this, Hifumi sighed while leaning back on his chair and staring at the ceiling.

“I see that you haven’t thought

about it carefully. Do you know why I came here by myself? Did you believe that I am a fool who trusts too much in his own strength? Did you make light of me as a idiot that wouldn't consider to be attacked?" (Hifumi)

"... What are you talking about?" (Kiyulson)

"I wonder which of us two isn't taking the exchange between nations seriously. Every last of you, why do you conclude your opponent would attack in an easily understandable way from the front?" (Hifumi)

While talking the faint smile floating upon Hifumi's face slowly stiffened due to his anger.

“You said you are called Kiyulson. Didn’t you consider the possibility of me killing you here? For example, did you think of the possibility of my subordinates secretly infiltrating and raiding the soldier posts in each place? Supposing that you lose all your pawns before the actual fighting begins, what will you do?” (Hifumi)

“I-Im-Impossible … But you haven’t heard my reply yet!” (Kiyulson)

Kiyulson’s face was soaked all over in sweat. He was nervous and his back became unsteady.

“This document itself was a plan to restrain your statesmen. You didn’t notice until the end, huh? Although trust is important, going this far is

like a splendid flower field.[2]"
(Hifumi)

While talking, he stood up and took out the katana in a very natural behaviour and then thrust it.

"! ... !?" (Kiyulson)

The point of the katana pierced through Kiyulson's lungs.

Watching him painfully breathing and scattering bloody vomit while thrashing about in agony on the ground, the female servant was dumbfounded. Falling on her bottom without grasping the reason for it, she just wept.

"Your representative will die very soon, what will you do?" (Hifumi)

“Pl-Please don’t kill me … pl-please … I-I don’t want to die yet …” (Servant)

Grovelling on the ground as the servant begged for her life, Hifumi’s ardor was dampened and he returned his katana into its scabbard as he watched Kiyulson’s state, who had died unnoticed.

His eyes emptily staring with a facial expression full of anguish he died just like that.

“If you choose to not fight, announce it immediately in the entire city. This city has been annexed into Orsongrande from today onward.” (Hifumi)

Going to the extent of declaring this

much, incidentally several troops of the third unit burst into the reception room.

“Viscount, are you fine?” (Trooper A)

“Obviously. How did it go on your side?” (Hifumi)

“The disposal of all soldier posts has been completed without any problems, Sir!” (Trooper B)

While Hifumi had gone to the meeting with the representative, Alyssa, after gathering information on the soldiers posts, had secretly infiltrated the city alongside the third unit, which had dispersed in the vicinity. They assaulted the soldier posts almost

simultaneously.

Several of them bore light injuries due to the resistance. All soldiers had been killed.

The female servant, who still didn't manage to get up, wore a face of disbelief listening to the contents of the talk.

"You heard it." (Hifumi)

"Y-Yes" (Servant)

"The possibility of using soldiers has vanished. Relay this news to the citizens with only the staff of this mansion. Do it right away. Tell anyone who wants to complain, to come here. So I can kill them." (Hifumi)

Although being hesitant, she quickly moved upon hearing Hifumi's words. To leave the room, the servant crawled on the floor in order to spread the information about the soldiers of the enemy nation while looking pathetic at the same time.

"What about the first and second unit?" (Hifumi)

"As planned, they are blockading all of the city's exits, Sir." (Trooper A)

"Good. I will go check the situation. 2 teams will remain here. In case the servants show unusual movements, kill them." (Hifumi)

"Yes, Sir!" (Troopers)

Taking the other troops along,

Hifumi left the mansion in high spirits.

In this way, they had performed the world's first one-sided invasion. The history of Arosel as small-scale city-state ended and it changed into a simple district city.

This truth wasn't only circulated amongst the surrounding cities but also reached the central government in no time.

Thereupon Vichy became aware of the situation for the first time.

It became a fact that Orsongrande really intended to go to war with Vichy.

* * *

Translation Notes

[1] Japanese sandals (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zōri)

[2] Some proverb? Not sure ... but pretty much clear meaning either way.

キュルソン - Kiyuruson -> Kiyulson

Chapter 28: Young and the Hopeless

The two entrances to the city were blockaded by Hifumi's troops; and while one could enter the city if he consented to an inspection, no one was allowed to leave.

An infantry unit oversaw each of the exists, while the engineer corps set up an iron gridded fence–the grid being shaped in diamonds—so as to narrow the entrances. If needed, it could expanded or contracted.

The third corps—the scouts—moved between the guardhouse and the Manor ferrying information and

documents; they would mingle with the crowd to gather opinions and rumors.

「There are no problems with the blockade. We prevented travelers from attempting to leave, but we do have citizens and merchants returning to the city. Although not one of them appeared at all suspicious, we cannot be certain that no one snuck in disguised」

Having heard this report, Hifumi ordered the troops to continue the blockade and the inspections, and departed into a city with a few soldiers following him. On the way he was joined by Alyssa, who would act as a guide.

「Why is it that we permit them to

enter but not leave?」

Alyssa asked Hifumi while walking right beside him.

「The less we hinder exchange the better. As this situation continues the citizens will put up with minor inconveniences. However, if food and fuel stop entering the city, that won't last long. Should they fear for their lives, they will soon revolt. Thus, so as to minimize the impact on the city, I plan to allow entrance into the city.」

And since the people believe it's a temporary measure while the government is being changed, they shouldn't mind being unable to leave too much.

「And the longer it takes other cities to learn of the happenings at Arosel, the better」

While talking he continued onward towards the busy city center while confirming the propaganda posted everywhere. Hifumi ordered city officials to post these to notify the citizens that they were now part of Orsongrande.

Furthermore, in the marketplace and other highly populated areas he posted criers who declared the same news for those who could not read.

The crier would be replaced by another after some time; currently, the speaker was the woman in the reception room who had begged

Hifumi to spare her life some time ago. Standing one floor above the rest, she emotionlessly conveyed the information to the public who had gathered before her.

「On this day, Arosel has become a part of Orsongrande. Presently, all are forbidden from attempting to leave the city; this ban shall be lifted soon」

「We're no longer a City-State?!」

「Where did all the soldiers go ?」

「There wasn't even a war, and the government suddenly switches sides! What treachery!」

「What will happen from now on 」

The citizens, oblivious to the actual situation, hurled insults and complaints at the criers; Hifumi, however, ordered that these remarks go unpunished and the people remain unoppressed. There is no problem if all they do is complain; once they realize that there is no actual effect on their daily lives they will quickly accept the change.

Hifumi passed through the crowd.

Seeing a gallant figure escorted by soldiers in never-before-seen uniforms, the citizens figured him to be the Orsongrande invader; however, as her merely was entering the public facility and was not acting violently, they silently watched him.

So far according to plan, Hifumi thought.

「 Now... what to do about their remaining forces 」

「 Forces? No soldiers remain 」

「 There are others. That's why I called for you, Alyssa, to guide me there 」

「 Where? 」

「 To the adventurer's guild 」

Arosel's adventurer's guild is right outside the marketplace.

The guild is an independent agency within the state and is boasts some strength; however, they also maintain a level of cooperation

with the state, and when the state falls into some crisis, they have always promised to help.

Of course, they could not be mobilized as any other military unit in case of a war, but they could be formally requested to help; and, driven by love for their country, many would rise to the task. Of course, there are also plenty loners among them—those who don't give a damn about what happens to this country or this city.

「We've come to meet you leader」

Hifumi said to the man behind the guild counter and showed him the guild card he had made in Orsongrande.

「Issued in Orsongrande　Hifumi-san, is it　huh?」

Seems like the identification was enough for the attendant to realize that the man before him was the one who had brought the city to his knees.

「That is　for what reason?」

「The country the guild deals with has changed. I've come to offer my greetings」

「H-however　」

「If the guild wishes to oppose me, that is fine. But」

Hifumi placed a wrapped package on the counter his escorts had carried with them. The adventurers

in the guild, as if hearing the entire conversation, were closely watching the scene unfold before them.

Their eyes were package on the counter; Hifumi removed the wrapping, revealing its dreadful contents.

「Hiii !」

The head of the city representative was neatly placed inside.

The anguish on the representative's head inspired such fear into those present that they could not even speak.

「If you want to oppose me, but one of us will end up looking like this」

「P-p-please wait a moment!」

Replacing the attendant who had fainted with foam coming from his mouth, a woman asked Hifumi to wait and hurried inside.

「Hey, that　」

「So those posters hanging all over the place were for real, huh」

「Then this city is now part of Orsongrande?」

「But there was no mention of a war happening!」

The adventurers were quite noisy, but neither the Hifumi nor his escort as much as bat an eyelid at this noise.

Right before they had entered the guild, Hifumi ordered them not to act regardless of what happens; so, they simply didn't even recognize the presence of the adventurers. If someone needed to be killed, Hifumi would do it himself.

While waiting for the guild leader to arrive, as if he had noticed something, Hifumi asked his escort to wait outside.

「 Me too? 」

「 Yeah, it's too cramped 」

「 It's too cramped? 」

Tilting her head to a side, Alyssa said and left the guild.

During this exchange an old man

came from the back.

「So you are the one who had come from Orsongrande　muh」

The old man groaned when he saw the head on the counter.

「News did come from the government　but to think it would end like this　」

「I'm Hifumi, the new head of state」

Ignoring the old man's groans and completely proceeding at his own pace, Hifumi said. The old man grimaced in return, but then nodded and responded,

「I am Lesh. The head of this guild」

Lesh was probably a mage. He had a white beard, wore a grey robe, and while his cane appeared simple, there was a jewel embedded into the handle.

「 Now then, how are you planning to treat this city's guild apologies, seems we have another customer 」

「 I am a member of this guild! Let me through! 」

A young voice was heard from outside the guild.

With a loud noise the doors of the guild burst open and in came a tall lad clad in golden armor followed by two beautiful women. One of the women was robbed, had red hair, and a staff taller than her. The

other girl carried a bow and had green hair.

「Lesh-san! What the hell is going on?!」

The lad ignored Hifumi and called out to Lesh.

「We were out hunting monsters and suddenly the city is filled with Orsongrande troops. What's going on?」

The robed woman followed up on the lad's comment. The woman with the bow was silent, but then noticed the head on the counter and quickly turned away.

The lad then noticed the head on the counter.

「W-what abomination ! Those Orsongrande bastards! Guys, we can just treat them as enemies now, right?! Now that I have returned let's launch a counter attack! We'll free the city from these invaders!」

(You're the only one who's so fired up, though)

After looking coldly at the lad's fiery speech, Hifumi addressed Lesh.

「Who's this bloody idiot?」

「He is the top adventurer at this guild, Calikoff. He is strong but lacks a composure」

「Oh, and can I take his words as the official stance of the guild?」

Lesh met Hifumi's gaze, and shook his head.

「No, all of our staff will serve you, Hifumi-sama. As for the other adventurers, it is their choice. We pray for your leniency」

「Probably not going to happen」

Lesh closed his eyes at the response, and bowed his head as if praying.

A few adventurers decided to oppose Orsognrande's rule after hearing Calikoff's speech. As for Calikoff, after hearing about Hifumi from a nearby comrade, he faced Hifumi.

「So you are Orsongrande's representative, huh taking the city

by cowardly tricks and killing the representative are heavy sins. Withdraw your troops at once and pay for your crimes!」

He shouted with a serious face; Hifumi looked at Lesh incredulously and asked,

「Is this guy for real?」

Lesh sighed and addressed Calikoff,

「Calikoff, it has been decided that the guild with serve Orsongrande and Hifumi-sama. The city has already fallen, can you please no cause any more problems?」

「What rubbish!」

Calikoff replied engraged.

Little by little Hifumi grew annoyed.

「 Ignoring all laws of war—who would yield to such tricks! Such actions could not possible be forgiven! 」

「 Forgiven by whom? 」

「 By justice! 」

Calikoff replied to Hifumi's question.

「 In that case, who decides that justice? 」

「 Justice isn't something someone decides! 」

「 And yet our definitions of justice differ. But this has gotten annoying. Hey, those who will follow this old

man's command go over there. You're in the way.」

At Hifumi's command about half of the adventurer's went behind the counter. They were those who were completely unaffected by Calikoff's fiery speech.

「You guys, do you not love this city?!」

「Maybe they just hate how you force your views on everybody? Or they just hate you?」

Hifumi retorted and a few people reflexively nodded,

「Guh　Very well, I will just have to show my justice with my actions! Now then, that's a sword on your hip, isn't it, draw it already　」

Without waiting for him to finish, Hifumi had already rapidly lunged at the robed woman behind him.

「Eh?!」

She did not doubt Calikoff's imminent victory so merely observed it as a sport, so she couldn't even react when Hifumi grabbed her head and crashed it hard into a wall.

Her body fell limply on the floor, her head clearly cracked. No one doubted that she was dead.

「F-Furiae」

While he was still muttering the name of his fallen comrade, the other girl just reached for her bow but lost her head in the process.

Her head rolled up to Calikoff's feet and stared blankly at him.

「Y-you bastard are !!」

He never had the chance to finish the sentence.

The hand that was supposed to be grabbing his sword now ended at the wrist.

「Ueh ?」

Calikoff watched dumbfounded as blood flowed from his wrist, and Hifumi used the opportunity to stab him through the eye.

His brain thus damaged, he fell a corpse.

Hifumi's eyes darkened and he

looked intensely at his blad.

「Hmph　it truly is more durable than a normal blade. Though I aimed at an opening, I still had to cut through armor, and yet not even a nick in the blade」

「C-Calikoff has　」

The other adventurers had now stood motionless, but Hifumi did not intend to let them off. If he did, they could go around causing problems, and, most importantly, they have already made their choice.

As if to check the quality of his sword, he continued slaughtering every single adventurer around him. Some were groaning without hands,

some had their guts spilled onto the floor, some women were cut right in half, and some men now turned into bleeding daruma (limbless).

And surrounded by corpses Hifumi wiped his katana and again inspected the blade. Though he has caused such terrible carnage, he was not at all moved.

As for those watching this unfold, many lost consciousness. But every single one of them now felt nothing but fear towards Hifumi.

Lesh included.

Even Lesh who has led a long life of pure combat had never seen anyone so specialized at killing people. And one who could do it so naturally.

「And thus we got that out of the way」

Hifumi said and turned towards Lesh's group with a bright smile on his face.

「You won't be able to leave the city for a few days, but afterwards everything will return to normal」

「Umm, how should we pay the adventurer's from now on?」

「Do it as you have before. The only thing that has changed is the head of state. The city will run as it always has」

Saying that he'll send help to clean the guild up, they watched Hifumi leave; and not one understood for what purpose Calikoff and the rest

had to die.

And thus even when Hifumi-dono's dominion would stabilize without many civilian casualties, and life returns to normal, there will probably be those who call Calikoff a hero and revolt.

「That's a darn shame」

But looking at Calikoff's face, which stared back with only one eye, Lesh realized that he was not allowed to feel pity.

Chapter 29: There She Goes

Hifumi occupied the cities and villages by the Orsongrande-Arosel border one by one.

Basically, the reason they captured Arosel the way they did was only for the soldiers to gain experience. In the other cases, he just had a small number of people infiltrating, where they either seized, or killed the representatives. The places that seemed to be able to offer some resistance were pinpointed and suppressed. The only matter where Hifumi personally moved were in regards to the guilds, where he had each of the guild masters swear

allegiance to him.

After killing many of Vichy's soldiers and adventurers, Hifumi's side also had some casualties, but the difference in losses were overwhelming. Their raids were performed in such a way that most of the populace didn't notice anything. But even if they did, the only thing that changed was the name of the governor.

Except the ones resisting, the rest were let live. It was also made known that the only change in the administrative body was that Hifumi was now the chief. Except that, there were no changes, so nothing really went out of hand. At the moment there simply wasn't enough time for a complete

restructure of the administrative system.

Except putting the central government's spies and liaisons on house arrest, Hifumi didn't really take any actions towards them. In time, they were to divulge the state of affairs within the their area of control.

In the meantime, three city states and ten of the surrounding villages were put under their control.

In each of the cities, the opposing parties were generally killed, and passage through the city gates was restricted. The soldiers left behind were the bare minimum for upholding those restrictions, so in the villages there could be as few as

three of them.

“It’s about time. Pajou. According to plan, after occupying this area, we are to establish a new national border. You should send for soldiers from Orsongrande to defend it.”

Hifumi pointed his finger at the map they took from the representative of Arosel’s mansion.

The place he pointed at was just a small-scale city named Rhone, but to get to one of the major cities in Vichy, you would have to pass by here. If they could set up a blockade here, one of Vichy’s five major cities would be whittled away.

“Understood.”

Until now, when the city they were

aiming for was right in front of them, Pajou had been following Hifumi's orders.

Looking at the size conquered territory, the military gains were unprecedented in the history of Orsongrande. Furthermore, occupying these cities and villages in a relatively unscathed condition, the tax revenue would barely need to be reduced at all.

But doing it in this manner, which was a first for the knights, Pajou didn't think the aristocrats could possibly agree to it. If the head of the campaign wasn't Hifumi, and rather someone else, he would've been replaced long ago.

"Well then, I guess I'll go have a

‘talk’ with them in Rhone.”

Seeing Hifumi straddling the horse and riding off on the highway alone, leaving the troops behind, Pajou was thinking about the future of Orsongrande.

Imeraria probably doesn’t have the notion to invade other countries herself. If that’s the case and Vichy wants to enter negotiations with us, offering Orsongrande an apology, it should all conclude there, but...

Would Hifumi agree to stopping at this point?

Would he listen to anyone’s opinion, and change the way he’s thinking?

..... In the end, would it all be over

with Vichy as the only victim?

Pajou looked at the troops participating in the campaign.

They were all showing signs of fatigue. Having no experience with these methods until now, they were performing silent invasions, and engaging in one-sided slaughter. Sure, they had signs of physical exhaustion, but what had really exhausted them was the repeated killing of enemies, including many who couldn't even resist.

They were primarily concentrating on performing night raids and surprise attacks. Although they were operations in which the masses weren't hurt, in the end their purpose was still having

others killed.

Exposing the Orsongrande knights and soldiers to this to the extent they were, what would become of them?

If they didn't stop soon, perhaps Orsongrande would crumble from within.

Origa couldn't understand Hifumi's real intentions, but didn't voice any opinions towards him. Alyssa didn't understand him either, but decided to keep following orders.

Perhaps if Hifumi was thinking about stopping...

Pajou was observing Kasha ordering the first unit around, preparing for the next assault. Among Hifumi's

followers participating in the campaign, Kasha was the only one having shown uneasy expressions a couple of times.

“Sorry, do you have some time?”

When Kasha seemed free for a little while, Pajou quietly asked her.

Closing in on Rhone, Hifumi frowned.

The smell of blood drifted over from the wind. The town’s entrance came into sight, but there were still no presence of people.

“What’s all this about...?”

Speeding up the horse, Hifumi tightly held onto his katana fixed on his waist. The left hand was

propping up the scabbard, making him able to draw at a moment's notice.

Steadily closing in on the city, a bizarre mud wall covering the entrance came into view.

Carefully approaching, he confirmed that a mud wall that was as hard as rock was completely covering the city entrance. Making sure that no one was around, he swung his katana, destroying the wall.

A stench of blood and decay burst forth the moment the entrance was cleared.

"So they were completely annihilated."

Looking around within the city, decomposed bodies were scattered all over the place, no living things to be found. Not even cats or dogs. Whether it be the stores, the inns, or even the regular houses, blood and dead bodies could be found everywhere.

Hifumi had an uncomfortable feeling. He judged that they had been dead from anywhere between a few hours and a day, but several patches on the corpses were extremely decomposed.

“A disease? ...No, that doesn’t seem to be the case.”

There were several bodies that hadn’t decomposed yet, seemingly having died due to blood loss from

the wounds on their necks and various other places. But these corpses looked suspicious as well. Their fingers and fingernails looked too clean. They should obviously have ‘been killed’, but there were no indications of resistance, and their faces were anything but warped in horror or pain. They were completely expressionless.

He didn’t understand the circumstances of the deaths of the decomposed bodies, but there were numerous cases of their throats having being clamped down upon, and clawing their own chests.

Most likely, something made them unable to breathe, and as a result, they ended up dying.

Hifumi abruptly withdrew his katana, as the stomach of one of the decomposed bodied opened. Some gas emerged, and the content gushed out with a splashing sound.

“The intestines are also extremely decomposed, but it seems that what’s inside the stomach is still fine.”

As Hifumi guessed that for some reason, they all started quickly decomposing at around the same time, he caught a quick glance of something through one of the bodies’ split clothes.

“Isn’t this the same magic tool that Gorilla-like guy was wearing?”

Wouldn’t that indicate that this

incident was orchestrated on the orders of Horant?

"... For the time being, we can't use the city unless we clean up."

Not being able to conclude anything more than that, Hifumi let out a sigh and returned to the where the campaign's forces were stationed.

When the soldiers first saw the city with the corpses spread all around, they were speechless. 'You took it this far?' their gazes seemingly tried to convey, as they concentrated on Hifumi.

"In that short amount of time, he killed this many?", someone muttered.

In order to avoid diseases from

breaking out, Hifumi had them dispose of the corpses by burning them, and then burying the bones.

“What is actually going on here?”

Having surveyed the surroundings, Origa asked Hifumi.

“No idea. The decayed guys were wearing that body strengthening magic tool we encountered before. Perhaps they were made to wear them by someone. The other ones had no facial expressions, so it appears to be the same kind of magic tool as the soldiers in Arosel were using. The low levels of resistance would indicate that this should be a strengthened version.”

Having said that, he had now seen

the strengthening magic tool a few times by now, but this time he had noticed a few things he hadn't back in Arosel.

He turned to Pajou who was situated a small bit away.

"Pajou. The soldiers from Arosel were using some kind of magic tool on the orders from their government, do you know what kind of tool it was?"

"No. I didn't think they were having a uniform magic tool they were equipped with..."

"But when you heard about it in Arosel, didn't you think that... Hmm?"

"Is there something wrong?"

“I feel a strange smell.”

Hifumi turned around, and walked towards one of the city’s wells. Origa and the rest followed him to take a peek into the well and sniffed to check the smell. It was an acidic smell that slightly stung the eyes.

Throwing in the bucket and withdrawing some water, there was nothing wrong with the color of it, but it was undoubtedly the source of that smell.

“..... Are there any magic tools that display an effect when you’re drinking, for example?”

“I haven’t seen one myself, but I’ve heard others talks about them existing. What about it?”

“For example, let’s assume we have a magic tool creating a substance that spreads throughout the body. If that substance could dissolve in water, what would happen when you drink water?”

“I don’t know if you could get the same result or not, but...”

“That’s why they needed to experiment with it, right?”

Both Origa and Pajou turned quiet.

Destroying a while city just for that purpose. That kind of deranged thinking made them shiver in a different way than when they were facing Hifumi.

“It’s probably the same kind of strengthening magic tool the border

guards used. The ones we smashed. While they were doing experiments all over the place, it seems like they migrated somewhere else."

Possibly because of Beirevra, Hifumi thought, but he had no positive proof that was actually the case.

"Tell everyone to not use the water from the well. Send someone from the third unit to make sure the water from the river close by is okay. Pajou, send a report back to Orsongrande. I don't mind if you're using one of the soldiers to do that."

If, after the messenger delivered the report, everyone hearing became spineless, it wouldn't be a laughing matter, Hifumi sighed.

Staying in Rhone for three days, they were steadily coming along with the preparations for fortifying the new national border.

The entrance on Vichy's side of the city was changed slightly. Only on the inside of the gate was a guard room prepared. The guards who had previous experience in guarding a border were put in charge of the central positions.

Furthermore, the second unit made a simple moat on Vichy's side of the city. Closing in on horse, they would have to to take a long detour.

"It's about time. Alyssa, since we've now established the new national border, have the third unit convey to the troops in the occupied cities

and villages that they can now release the restrictions on entering and exiting the cities."

"Roger!"

"Pajou, you make the preparations to receive the troops from Orsongrande that are to be stationed here. There are a lot of houses remaining, so seizing a few inns to use as well should be enough. No one should complain about that, right?"

"Understood."

"The second unit is to continue the investigations within the city. If there are any survivors, take them into custody."

"Will do."

“What about the first unit?”

“They should get accustomed to defending the border for now.”

Having issued all the orders, Hifumi felt worn out and told the others he’d lie down for a while, after which he headed towards a suitable inn.

“With this, we’re done with the first step, aren’t we?”

Kasha muttered, stretching her back.

“Yeah. But we still haven’t achieved our own objective, have we?”

Only after dealing with Beirevra would they have taken their own revenge, Origa mentioned. It was

something the two of them had talked about many times already.

“About that...”

Kasha put her index finger to her cheek and said in a small voice, not meeting Origa’s gaze.

“We’ve already been released as slaves, and continuing like this, I don’t know how many more people we have to kill before we reach Beirevra... I also thought it’s about time we returned to our primary professions.....”

For every word Kasha said, Origa’s eyes turned more severe.

“I-I’ll return to the rest of the unit!”

Not being able to withstand the

mood turning heavier, Alyssa ran away.

Pajou really wanted to do so as well, but this was the situation she was looking for. But more than just having it happen, she had to see for herself how it would unfold, so she stayed to listen to their conversation.

“Kasha, you may have some valid points in what you say, but I didn’t think you were this dishonorable.”

“Hi-Hifumi giving us our freedom back is amazing, I’m not saying it isn’t! But we’re adventurers, so originally our enemies were the monsters. Killing people is just... I just think that’s wrong.”

“If that’s the case, you can return to the capital by yourself. I’ll still be following Hifumi.”

“Ah…”

After that, Origa turned around and walked away at a quick pace.

Kasha stretched out her right hand as if to stop her, but grabbed nothing but air.

“I’m sorry. I made you do something unpleasant.”

“It’s fine. We aren’t fit to command soldiers like this in the first place. Origa will eventually come to understand that as well. I’m thankful towards Hifumi, but that’s not reason enough to do this for an extended period of time… And

honestly, for her own sake, Origa needs to realize that Hifumi isn't a person that's good to always stay close to.

"Yeah, I understand you as well."

If Hifumi knew about Pajou's goal, how would he react? He's a person who doesn't care about others, so perhaps he wouldn't say anything if a comrade decides to leave. But what would happen if they do something Hifumi would regard as treachery, or hostility?

She might not be able to return to her own country, or perhaps even die. But even then, Pajou was determined to weaken Hifumi's faction. He had become a hero, and brought both triumph and benefits

to Orsongrande. But what they've gotten so far was enough. They didn't need more.

This is for the selfish sake of those politicians, but if you're going to resent someone, please just hate me

Walking back towards the assigned lodgings, Pajou had now decided on something she wouldn't report to the princess.

Chapter 30: From The Inside

Although they solidified the national border, many of the new fortresses belong to Orsongrande in name only—they are unoccupied.

The invasion so far, primarily due to the fact that preventing people from getting out also slowed down the speed at which news travel, has continued without much opposition from Vichy.

And now, via these fortresses, some people are leaving Orsongrande for Vichy.

Hifumi, who observed this happen,

merely marveled at how few actually emigrated.

Yet their hesitation to leave their home cities and villages is predictable: the roads are underdeveloped and their only means of substance comes from the businesses they took years if not generations to develop.

The only who do travel are the seconds sons, the unemployed, and the wealthy.

「 Frankly, I thought you might just decide to massacre everyone... 」

Kasha said, while partaking with Hifumi the lunch the supply corps prepared

「 Civilians are not the enemy. Only

the enemy needs to be slaughtered. But fighting tens or even hundreds of soldiers is inefficient and boring. Instead, it's best to force those Vichy bastards to become afraid and to strengthen their ranks with more people. Then, they might finally come at us for real」

「 If they do, wouldn't we lose? 」

Alyssa was there among them. Only Origa and Pajo have not returned from their respective tasks. In fact, Origa has been intentionally avoiding Kasha since yesterday.

「 Right, we might lose 」

「Huh ?」

Kasha froze mid-bite at Hifumi's nonchalant declaration.

「The soldiers here have only crammed knowledge of infiltration and assassination. Even if they had any worth as soldiers before, they would simply be overwhelmed numerically」

「But then, what should we do?」

「We're fine as long as we don't fight them head on. We need to dictate the environment and attack them after dividing them into smaller groups. Besides, we don't really need to wait for our enemy to gather their forces, and even if they do, we just need to have them scatter a bit」

But should there be a person more capable than I among them we'd lose, Hifumi concluded while

putting the last piece of meat in his mouth.

「 But they teach soldiers never to consider defeat 」

Alyssa murmured, and Hifumi rebuked her,

「 Don't be a fool: how could you think of cutting someone down without considering being cut down? 」

「 Says a guy who could easily cut down hundreds 」

「 A hundred may not pose a problem, but I too am human. I too need to rest, and I cannot fight continuously for many hours. If I fail to dodge even a single slash out of fatigue, I will die. No matter how

strong you become, this fact never changes」

That is why killing is just as fulfilling as living, Hifumi said.

These words were imprinted in Kasha's mind: even these monster of a human considered death.

After lunch, Hifumi observed the border with Alyssa, and called out to three men attempting to leave.

「Yo, could you wait a minute?」

「O-oh my, Viscount-sama」

The first of the three burly men responded to Representative Hifumi.

「You are spies from Vichy, aren't

you?」

「N-no, we are simple traveling merchants 」

Wiping the sweat from his brow the man replied, but Hifumi grabbed his hand and pointed to his palm.

「Merchant's don't have hands like this. Drop the obvious lies」

The smile on the man's face disappeared, and his looked down, serious.

「As expected of the Expeditionary Force General, I presume. I applaud you. I am indeed a spy deployed by Vichy's Central Council」

While this man was already in Anarazel city when it was occupied

by Orsongrande's Expeditionary Force, he was away from the representative's manor and thus avoided capture. So he pretended to be a merchants and sought to join others on his return to Central.

「 Seems like I am fated to perish here. These two men are indeed in my employ, but I have hired them here—they know nothing about my purpose. I beseech you to have mercy 」

「 What are you doing talking to me like I'm some homicidal maniac? I didn't stop you to kill you. You're headed to Central, so I wanted you to deliver something for me 」

「 A delivery, you said? Should I... Should I hand it to the Council? 」

Once the spy noticed the document Hifumi took out, he immediately realized it was addressed to Vichy's government.

「 Yeah, so after they get a grasp on what has happened here, I need the response to this letter... let's say twenty days from now 」

Since it takes seven days to reach Central from here, he gave them plenty of time.

「 Understood. I have matters to report to Central, so this shall be no problem 」

「 Your name? 」

「 Vinu, your grace 」

「 Now then, Vinu, these documents

are important. Don't go and get killed by a monster or something」

「Understood. I shall deliver the letter without fail」

Vinu bowed, reverently accepted the letter, and set off towards Vichy.

「Hifumi-san, what's in that letter?」

Alyssa, who up until quietly observed, asked out of curiosity.

「　Right... well, I guess it's fine」

Hifumi said after concluding that nothing will change even if she were to know now.

「So you know there's this man that Origa and Kasha are looking

for—Beirevra? Apparently he's one of Vichy Council's spies. Rather than having to run around all of Vichy looking for him, it's a demand to have him extradited」

Hifumi could only laugh thinking that this document had Imeraria's signature on it. Now, Vichy could simply blame Beirevra as the cause of his war, or respond in silence and face condemnation as a country that harbors criminals. One way or another, they were being pressured.

「So their choice is either to sacrifice Beirevra to appease Orsongrande or attempt to push us out with their military might」

「So what will we do for now?」

The answer was not due for another twenty days, so they had lots of time. Hifumi decided to take that time to carefully tour his dominion.

「 Reinforcements are bound to come from Orsongrande soon. I'll leave the occupied territory to them and go see my land 」

「 Should I come along? 」

「 Do as you wish 」

The following day reinforcements arrived to the frontier and, while strengthening control over the new territory, decided to convert the town of Rhone into a military base.

The Expeditionary Force, now relieved of their duty, were scheduled to patrol Hifumi's

domain.

That day Hifumi gathered his troops and announced their return to Fokalore.

「I have matter to report to the royal capital, so I shall return there」

Pajo stated, and Hifumi nodded in understanding.

Kasha, fidgeting about, timidly continued,

「Umm... if it's not a problem, I too would like to return to the capital 」

Origa remained silent but looked at Kasha with an ice-cold glare.

「You mean to quit the military? Have you abandoned your revenge?」

Kasha cleared her throat and responded to Hifumi's question.

「Thanks to Hifumi-san's and Imeraria-sama's efforts, I have regained my freedom and even killed the soldiers responsible... so how do I say this, I think I have exacted my revenge already. Frankly, I'm just tired, I want to go back to my carefree adventuring days」

「If that is what you wish for, then so be it. Follow with the squad until Fokalore, and feel free to do as you wish from there」

Hifumi said, and looked at Origa. He had thought that Origa wanted to the same, but she remained silent.

「 Is that alright? Weren't you together for like forever? 」

Alyssa said but regretted it immediately, praying to take back what she had just said.

「 It wasn't even that long. I merely bought and used them; our goals merely overlapped. That is all 」

As long as they themselves chose their path, it didn't bother Hifumi that much, but then Origa stated,

「 I will follow Hifumi-sama! No matter how much suffering lies ahead, this life was saved by

Hifumi-sama. I will follow you until the end!」

「 Do as you wish」

「Yes, I will!」

Watching this, Pajo could not understand why Kasha recoiled at those words as she did, but she clearly saw that Origa's loyalty to Hifumi only deepend.

(Perhaps she too is a danger)

She might become a second set of eyes for Hifumi, smelling out dangers that lie ahead. Perhaps she had to eliminate Origa first.

Being deep in thought, Pajo noticed a bit too late that Hifumi's glare was focused on her.

「 What is it? 」

「 Thinking things through is alright, but watch your step. Some who think to hard tend to do the stupidest things 」

「 I-I see. I will keep that in mind 」

Pajo's pulse quickened at his warning, as she could not figure out if he had figured her thoughts out or not.

「 I wonder if the country is just trying to kill me... 」 (Sabnak)

After reaching Fokalore after a few days of travel, they were met with but a ghost of Sabnak.

Managing the reinforcements for the Expedition Force and ferrying

Pajo's reports, managing Fokalore's affairs and negotiating for troops, all of these matters – none of which befit a knight – fell on poor Sabnak's shoulders.

「 Anyways, I am glad that you have returned, Hifumi-san. I can finally return to the capital 」

Sabnak exclaimed, laughing with tears streaming down his face, thinking of how he could finally hand over the office and affairs of late Viscount Haagenti to Hifumi. All of Haagenti's officials and servants were either eliminated or escaped, so even living in the manor was a challenge.

「 How are the civil slaves I bought? 」

「Civil servants you mean... they have already arrived. They have spent every waking hour silently digesting the information you gave them. I have briefly looked at their work and must admit that it exceeds my own education.」

And nonchalantly dismissing the question of whether that much education was even necessary for them with a “those are just basics,” Hifumi responded,

「If the civil slaves are ready to take over the affairs, feel free to join Pajo and Kasha on their return to the capital. If there are any soldiers who wish to accompany you, please take them along」

「Understood.」

The major points were summarized well: economic situation was stabilizing rapidly, faction representatives abstained from any major action, certain statesmen have been replaced, and a list of merchants entering and exiting the domain was compiled.

「Aren't you fit for this kind of work more than that of a knight?」

「Please, don't. I'm a knight. And after returning to the capital I intend to rest for a while. It's unnatural for a person to spend so many nights awake」

Representatives have been changed in the past and normally these take control of their land immediately; but never before has there been one

like Hifumi who immediately set off on an expedition.

「About that... I assume you know... but you have heard about the town destroyed within Vichy, right?」

「Yes, the news of that matter and the possibility that magic item was used is known here」

「Well, about that... you've been assigned to investigate that case」

「Uehh?!」

「That's what the captain of the reinforcements asked me to tell you; at least investigation of magic items fits a knight」

Hifumi said while smiling and sipping tea. Tea was prepared by a

proper maid, so it made even Hifumi relax.

Feeling as if he's been influenced by this world too much, Hifumi placed down his cup and sighed.

「C-can't you leave it to Pajo-senpai?!」

His dreams of a rosy vacation drifting further and further away, Sabnak was in a state of panic; Hifumi, however, merely stared at the ceiling.

「Pajo, huh... You know how she is, she is probably busy working for the queen」

The ceiling was decorated with carved lumber, with the depictions of dragons and phoenixes visible.

These beings too are present in this world.

「For Imeraria-sama's sake, you say?」

Sabnak turned his head and was met with Hifumi's laughter.

「Yeah, and a big job I bet it will be. Now then, how about I meet the slaves. They'll get busy from now on as well」

「Huh? Ah, understood」

Hifumi started for the door, but then stopped.

「By the way, how many soldiers does Orsongrande have?」

「Soldiers? Those loyal to the

crown number around 10,000; under the control of the nobles there may be up to 30,000 more」

「Hmm~」

「Oh, and there are currently three thousand soldiers stationed at Horant. Why do you ask?」

Sabnak answered as if trying to shoot down any requests for additional troops. But that is not why Hifumi asked.

「Not to increase our troops. If there are more people, it's easier to trip over. "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles"」

「 How do you mean?」

「You'll see」

Without turning to look at Sabnak, Hifumi left the room.

Chapter 31: This Love

Hifumi was notified to return to the capital for an informal conferring of a peerage.

Such simplicity is fine, huh? Listening to the messenger, this was the style during war. You could say it was an official reason in this case.

I think there is no necessity to expressly return from the front. You could consider this no more than a regulation. Actually, it seemed to be the first time for Hifumi to rise in nobility by this method.

“Maa, since Pajou is heading toward

the castle currently, I doubt she wants me to accompany her." (Hifumi)

Although Hifumi could vaguely guess Pajou's motive, he didn't plan on dealing with it in any special way.

As he didn't really consider Orsongrande an enemy nor did he judge them to be allies either, he didn't particularly care which path they would choose.

The state being as it is, Hifumi officially became the feudal lord of the central viscount territory of Fokalore. The mansion of the former feudal lord of Fokalore became his residence from now on.

Since he wasn't very concerned about the place he lived, the new maids he had employed only were to clean as he decided to use all of the rooms without changing them.

Even though Hifumi said it would be plenty for him to use a small room like the servants used, he was persuaded by Sabnak that if the feudal lord were in such situation the servants rooms would end up shrinking even more. Thus, the result was that he would use the room Hagenti used before.

Incidentally, Origa and Alyssa also received a room for living in the same former feudal lord mansion.

The two were given rooms that were originally used by the former

feudal lord's relatives. Alyssa swiftly decided on an extravagant room to live in, but she was unusually bewildered having her circumstances being taken care of by maids.

From the time Origa returned to Fokalore she stayed close to Hifumi almost as if her position was to be his secretary. She also aspired the room next to Hifumi's room. Thus she was finishing her work vigorously. (E: Really wants that mistress position, huh?)

Although one part of the expeditionary force returned to the capital, the majority of above 80 people stayed behind.

Revising from their organisation

during the war, they divided into 4 groups to guard the territory, maintain the public order, and practice all kinds of things. They changed into a simple way of performing a relief rotation and decided to conscript new recruits from within the territory.

Alyssa was employed as army manager while Origa was employed to manage the civil officials. Merely for form's sake Hifumi arranged this shape of system for now.

By the way, as Alyssa was anxious to manage the troops by only herself, a single woman called Miyukare, who was originally a civil official in the capital amongst the civil official slaves, was assigned as her assistant.

These decisions up until here were made and notified as they decided to move towards Fokalore. After arriving at Fokalore these were immediately realized.

◆◇◆◇◆

And now, in front of Hifumi, four of the slaves took a written test while eagerly sitting at a desk.

The objective was to see the results of finishing the provided assignment.

Given that Miyukare secured the duty of being Alyssa's assistant, only the remaining four had to

undergo the test.

As it would affect their own future, all of them were desperate.

“Alright, it’s time. Everyone put down your pens.” (Hifumi)

The scratching sound of filling in the papers ceased and without knowing who it was, the sound of breathing out could be heard.

Since it was merely the portion of four people, Hifumi collected the sheets of paper without delay and graded them quickly.

“Alright, maa, I guess it’s fine. All of you will operate as civil officials under my direct control.” (Hifumi)

After checking the answers of the

test, Hifumi tossed the papers on top of the desk and looked at everyone while talking.

“I’m so glad...” (Slave)

A single woman muttered while the others had a relieved facial expression.

“Well then, I will now explain regarding the organisation of this city’s administration. As it isn’t a city of significant scale, it isn’t feasible to make anything but a simple structure. The five of you, you guys and Miyukare, will play a leading role in the administration of this city with Origa on top. As you know, Miyukare will be transferred to the troops. Depending on the situation she will bear the duty of

mediating with the administration. Caim (T/N >> Kaimu <<) and Brokra (T/N: >> Burokura <<) will carry out the budget compilation as well as tax collection. Paryu (T/N: >> Pariyu <<) will manage the creation of a family register. The administrative guidance related to commerce and industry will be done by Doelgar (T/N: >> Douerugaru <<). As I will steadily hire personnel, I will appropriately divide them and assign them to you guys." (Hifumi)

"Ano ... What is a family register?" (Paryu)

The youngest woman among the slaves, Paryu, raised her hand.

"Ah, now that you mention it, I didn't explain that." (Hifumi)

Hifumi had heard from Sabnak roughly about the tax system in this world.

From each farmer in a village around half of their annual harvest would be collected.

From the merchants a fixed amount of money would be annually collected depending on the scale of their business and the merchandise they dealt with.

As for the other members of the general public, a staff member would annually collect a poll tax depending on the town.

Although Hifumi said there were many leaks like that, since there were only few people who could

calculate, Sabnak mentioned with confidence that this degree of taxation was the limit of what was possible.

“It is work that investigates who and where someone is living and compiles this information. Certainly, because there is obviously no concept of addresses or such either, most of the personnel will be at first sent under your supervision. After explaining the details, they will attach a number to all plots of land and houses within the city. Furthermore they will check up who lives there and what kind of occupation they have. And then you will hand this information over to Caim’s group. This will become the basic information in order to collect the

taxes." (Hifumi)

He also explained that the performance of the administration services was based on the information obtained by receiving reports about birth and death.

Although Paryu had a face which likewise could mean that she understood it or didn't, after listening to his explanation she nodded in assent.

"Even though I have the work called 'guidance of the commerce and industry,' what would be good to do there?" (Doelgar)

The next question came from Doelgar, a middle-aged man with a bearded face.

“Generally it is to make a guild for every type of industry. Each craftsman and store should be coordinated through them by giving them instructions depending on the situation of the industry and the instructions from the administration. Also, those guys who are unemployed will be efficiently sent to the places, which don’t have enough hands, as manpower by the guilds.” (Hifumi)

“I see.” (Doelgar)

Doelgar seems to have understood it quickly.

“And, before long there will arrive several dwarf slaves at Fokalore. Since they are able to somewhat produce some things as well, we

will distribute those goods, which have become our specialty, through the guilds in the country's market. Everything in regards to that I will entrust to you." (Hifumi)

"I have understood." (Doelgar)

Furthermore, such things as tax collection and tax rate, he explained to everyone the details of what he planned during the war. As soon as the family register information was gathered, he would announce the change of the tax system.

In order to validate them, each of them would be given a private room in the feudal lord's mansion to serve as office and would have an exclusive maid assigned to them.

All of them were perplexed by the treatment that was no different from a noble.

“You can interpret it as your work being this level of demanding and intensity.” (Hifumi)

After these words some became scared while others showed their determination.

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That day the dwarves arrived in the city, they prepared the tools for the construction work in the city and were shown the blueprints while receiving the necessary explanations. The instructions were about the new buildings like the police box, where a smaller amount

of guards could be stationed unlike a guard office in concern of the the city's security. Hifumi was vigorously going through the entire city.

As new feudal lord he walked through the city on his own feet. Even though the city's inhabitants were bewildered in the beginning, it reached the point that they greeted him as they gradually memorized his face.

Although Hifumi frankly thought of it as troublesome, considering that they had provided the money and materials for the sake of the war, it naturally turned into him improving his acceptance of the matters regarding his governmental position.

“Somehow your mood has become a bit more gentle.” (Origa)

Origa smiled while making black tea for Hifumi.

Except during work, Origa is always besides me, Hifumi thought while becoming aware of it.

“Is that so? Maa, because I have become a feudal lord there are no fellows lunging at me. Vichy hasn’t made a move yet either. Even though it would be irritating for it to be continuously peaceful as it is now, it will become a large war very soon anyway. I think it is fun to prepare for that.” (Hifumi)

However, it is was also a fact that he grew tired from the several days

of peace.

As he was spending hours inside to lead the government which he wasn't used to, he felt that the scent of battle vanished.

There was once again a hunch welling up that he wouldn't be able to kill similar to the anguishing time he felt when he lived on earth for ten-odd years.

"That ... I heard from Alyssa." (Origa)

Towards Origa's voice he returned his consciousness from his deep thinking.

"What?" (Hifumi)

"It's about the matter regarding

Hifumi-sama sending a written letter in order for to the central government of Vichy to hand over Beirevra. Thank you very much." (Origa)

Given that Alyssa is apparently often consulting with Origa, I guess she heard about it then.

Although I didn't plan on hiding it either.

"We don't know yet what kind of effect it will have. There is no guarantee that Vichy will follow it obediently either. There is no need to thank me for something like that." (Hifumi)

"Even if there are no results, I will gladly accept the situation just like

that. Because of that, um ...” (Origa)

With a deep red face Origa tried to convey something while being fidgety but she wasn’t quite able to put it in words.

Seeing her like that, although it is appropriate for a girl of her age, for some reason she ends up wearing me out recently, Hifumi didn’t consider his own gender in the slightest at all.

“You better not continue saying anything yet regarding the previous matter.” (Hifumi)

“Eh?” (Origa)

“Even I am a man. I am happy about your feelings.” (Hifumi)

Hifumi urged Origa to the couch in the reception and also sat in front of her himself.

“But, I bought you, who was a slave, as a slave. I couldn’t accomplish your vengeance properly either. Maa, I guess for Kasha this much was fine already. Even though I won’t say that I am close to fulfilling your revenge, isn’t this like the often seen part of imprinting something?” (Hifumi)

“Th-There is no such thing!” (Origa)

Origa, thinking that her feelings were denied, started to spill tears.

“Calm down. As I haven’t really settled down in this world yet, you

can say that I didn't think about wanting to have a relationship like that. It is for my own convenience. Sorry." (Hifumi)

Seeing the figure of the apologizing Hifumi, Origa quickly subdued her feelings.

"S-Such a degree of apology towards me, Hifumi-sama, please stop it!" (Origa)

"I don't dislike you. But, in the current situation I don't plan to go any further than that. That's right ... once the case with Vichy has been settled, I will make time for us to talk at ease. However, only if Origa's feelings haven't changed at that time." (Hifumi)

Even though Hifumi's way of talking showed signs of jesting, Origa took it seriously.

"I understand. As my feelings won't change, I will prove it to you that I am suitable woman to stand at Hifumi-sama's side. Therefore, could you please watch me?" (Origa)

"... Understood" (Hifumi)

Was Hifumi's reply sufficient for her for the time being? Regaining her smile, Origa bowed and left the room as she had to return to her work.

Hifumi, who was left behind, unsheathed his katana and checked the sword blade.

He saw that there was no nick in the blade. This had become his daily routine.

< Lover, Marriage, huh? Although I didn't think about these things over there, now that I have become a noble, I wonder if somewhere there is an ojou-san approaching to snuggle up to me like the impressions I got from reading in books? As it is an often heard story, I wonder whether my own character will get as amicable to marry Origa or some other partner? Will I be able to cease killing people? > (Hifumi)

Other than killing or being killed, me ending up changing in such way, that is scary.

When I arrived in this world, I thought that I would be afraid for the first time.

I certainly never expected my first dread would be about relations with women, Hifumi sneering at himself in mockery.

Currently Hifumi didn't possess anything of importance to him.

Be it the nation or the city, he was able to abandon them at any time. Sacrificing the populace in those circumstances as well, depending on the situation he wouldn't have any qualm to do so.

Also separating from Kasha, he only thought that the usable fellows decreased by one without having

any sentimental feelings.

Pajou and Sabnak as well, he intended to kill them if they asked unnecessary questions or became his enemies even if they were close to him.

< I wonder if there is a fellow who wants to become the bride of such a guy? ... > (Hifumi)

Or, I wonder, if becoming the wife is impossible, to become a cherished partner?

Bearing a child if possible ...

“Stop, let’s just stop. It will only cause me to feel depressed.” (Hifumi)

As it was inevitable for him to

worry about various things without making a decision either, he continued to immerse himself in his work.

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Apparently it wasn't only Thorn who worked early but it was something that could be said for the entire dwarven race.

The dwarf slaves Hifumi had bought from Ular did their assigned work energetically from the first day after arriving in Fokalore.

As the exclusive development team of the territory, the leader of the dwarf slaves, Pruflas (T/N: >> Purufurasu <<), separated 10 dwarves in several groups and had

them work hard on the manufacturing.

As 15 dwarves were purchased, the remainder was working at the construction of the city currently.

The manufacturing area was an extensive workshop which was bought to be utilized.

Seeing the figure of Hifumi arriving, Pruflas ran up to him.

“Oo, feudal lord-sama?” (Pruflas)

“It seems the work is making progress.” (Hifumi)

Despite it only being one day since the work had started, there were already several products lined up at the side of the workshop.

“No, not at all. Since accepting the assignment of such enjoyable work, we are doing our best. After becoming slaves, though we wondered whether we would work in the mines until death, we can now produce things that we haven’t seen until now either like this and that. We all do this in order to thank the feudal lord. Now, please confirm whether we were able to follow your instructions adequately!” (Prulflas)

Guided by Prulflas, he checked the products in turns.

Producing according to Hifumi’s instructions, there were ballistas and weapons resembling large bow-guns. In order for those being able to shoot simple wood lances were

produced instead of arrows.

So that huge quantities could be produced in a short time, rather than making arrows, the lances were quickly made by simply shaving the wood.

Furthermore there were rail cars in proportion of the size of a single standard-sized auto-mobile.

Although it was troublesome to explain the constructions, he judged it to be the maximum priority of his instructions to increase the means of transportation as it was indispensable to invigorate the industry.

The mechanism to move the upper and lower ends of the handle was

simple. There was also a single rod installed to control the brakes.

“Although I can understand the weapons, what do you want to do with this wagon called “rail car”? Certainly, as it is easy to move it with two people even if it has to carry heavy load, according to the blueprints it doesn’t provide a function to make a curve.” (Pruflas)

“I will draw up an exclusive rail. To say it accurately, we will lay out two poles side-by-side and place it on top of them. It will make the curves according to the curving of those poles.” (Hifumi)

“I see” (Prulflas)

“Haven’t you finished the

movement test? Since I will dispatch some personnel as support, please construct two rails around the whole city." (Hifumi)

Hifumi handed over a drawing of the whole city. It showed the traced lines of the drawn parts of the roads.

"Are there two of them?" (Pruflas)

"It's convenient to have one going around in reverse. It will be a popular way of cheap travelling. It will stimulate the movement of people and goods in the whole city." (Hifumi)

"How unexpected, to consider the population of the city." (Pruflas)

At the exaggerated agreement of

Pruflas, Hifumi laughed refreshingly.

“It is different. After this, I will have you make further rails having segments diverging away from this city to other places. In the direction of the national border.” (Hifumi)

“Not in the direction of the royal capital?” (Pruflas)

“Obviously not. Won’t these be used in order to quickly transport materials for the war? Goods and people as well. That alone is already advantageous for swiftly preparing.” (Hifumi)

The young feudal lord talked about dangerous things while smiling brightly. Prulflas had his breath

taken away.

<This is the rumored hero “Knight of the Slender Sword”?> (Pruflas)

As for Prulflas, rather than a hero he felt something even more dreadful.

But, thinking back on his own position, there was nothing for him to do but displaying his skill here. He acted as if he didn’t hear Hifumi’s indications and renewed his attitude.

While he had a hunch that this city would become a battlefield someday.

Chapter 32: Message In A Bottle

Debold, the second son of the Müntzer marquis family, brought ten guards and ten chamberlains with him as he left the royal capital. It all looked like a parade-like spectacle, with leaflets prepared for him rolling around. That was something Hifumi clearly saw when he returned to the royal capital with Alyssa.

On the scattered leaflets, “According to princess Imeraria’s wish, for the sake of the peace and harmony of the nation, Debold Müntzer has become the peace envoy”, could be read.

Despite it being the royal capital, the literacy rate was low. So even though some people picked up the leaflets, the extent of those who could read them was practically non-existent. Part of the crowd, consisting of drunkards and carefree people, were cheering loudly. But the huge majority were coldly appraising the flamboyant noble.

Like the people below, on the castle's balcony, Imeraria saw them off with a cold gaze.

"Imeraria, did you need me?"

The one who called out to her was the Third Knight Unit's Pajou.

"Oh, it's Pajou."

Turning around and seeing Pajou's face, Imeraria relaxed a little.

"With this, I too, for the government's sake, have sacrificed someone else, haven't I?" Imeraria spoke but then mocked herself.

[No, the first victim should be he who is hailed as a hero]

"Debold was aiming for you, Imeraria. In my humble opinion, shouldn't this be viewed as self-defense? Besides, the one who suggested this was me, so let me be the one to shoulder the sin of sacrificing that man."

"... I'm sincerely happy over having your loyalty. Well then, in order for that plan to not come to naught, we

can't do anything but advance, can we?"

Following Imeraria, Pajou left the balcony and the two entered Imeraria's office. Pajou was tormented with a sense of regret. Not because of the plan with sacrificing someone, but mainly due to what she had previously told Imeraria.

Earlier, after having separated from Hifumi, Kasha and Sabnak joined Pajou, who had already returned to the royal capital. In order to quickly report to Imeraria, the three briskly cleaned themselves off and arrived at the castle gates.

After Kasha managed to get permission to enter, they were all rewarded with some gold by Imeraria in recognition of their services.

As they had previously received remuneration from Hifumi as well, Kasha did show some restraint in the beginning, but she was eventually forced to accept the gold as funds to start her life anew.

While Imeraria, on the other hand, was thinking that if they could use some money to win over someone having been close to Hifumi, it would be a cheap price to pay in the long run.

After all, if Hifumi kept going like this, continuing the war and

building up strength, who knows when he would have a full-blown confrontation with Orsongrande. Fearing that, Imeraria wanted to hear Pajou's opinion, having seen Hifumi's manner of fighting close up. As the report concluded and Sabnak and Kasha stepped back, Pajou began a long follow-up session with Imeraria.

"At first I didn't think Hifumi would be able to accomplish numerous amounts of military achievements as he has now. This, of course, is a matter of my predictions being too naive since we knew that only his individual military prowess was strong. But him having experienced countless battles, it seems that we still underestimated his absurdness."

“Imeraria. I can say that I’m of the same opinion. The prime minister would also agree with us on this conclusion. No one could have expected that his love for battle would enable him to brilliantly take control of the enemies territory with such ease.”

While someone may be strong individually, it doesn’t mean he will survive on the battlefield. And as far as the two of them, having undergone training for nobility and knights respectively, in terms of strategy and tactics, Hifumi’s an expert. Besides using methods never seen before, he also had the lowest amount of possible casualties... those were all completely unexpected accomplishments.

News of Hifumi's activities had been brought to the royal capital by merchants coming from Vichy, and had already become the topic of conversation within the capital. Everywhere you went you could hear how the "Knight of the Slender Sword", with barely any casualties or losses, had overwhelmed Vichy. It was just as it was in one of those heroic tales.

It was slightly exaggerated, but mostly true. Something that should've been good news for Orsongrande was conversely quite unpleasant. Even if the Royal castle didn't want Hifumi's popularity to rise, there wasn't much they could do about it.

If it continued like this, Hifumi may

take away all the popularity Imeraria was having, as well as the sense of respect towards the royal castle, for himself.

“He really is a hero, but above that, he’s a lunatic. He’s nurturing both cities and the people within them for the sake of fighting, and creating environments in which he can kill others.”

Using intentionally strong words, Pajou told Imeraria.

She didn’t intend to say that but it was a necessary step for the formation of her plan. For only under the leadership of the princess could her plan be carried out.

“If you’d forgive me, I have a plan

I'd like to present to you."

"Go ahead, let me hear about it."

The plan Pajou had thought about was, simply put, 'to make it seem like Imeraria was the one who ended the final war'. That Arosel, while under Orsongrandes control, was essentially an unnecessary territory and would be difficult to govern.

First of all, they'd use Debold as a messenger to provoke Vichy into dispatching troops to take back their previous territory. While they're fighting Hifumi in territories such as Fokalore, which he had just recently been bestowed, or Arosel which has recently become occupied, Imeraria would

unconditionally surrender Vichy's former territories with an absolute concession. Lastly, they'd secretly make an agreement to cease hostilities. Pajou planned to achieve these plans all in one go.

"Debold will probably be killed. And the majority of the soldiers leaving for Arosel and the like will die as well. But with this, Hifumi's military gains will reach its limit. And we'll then publicize that you were the one who brought back the peace."

"Vichy's soldiers should be able to hold Hifumi back, shouldn't they?"

First of all, the initial unrest would be over there. And as a result of Vichy taking up arms, they should

be able to tear into Hifumi and afflict some damage.

“That being the case, we need to have Vichy counterattacking with a lot of soldiers. It’s necessary to provoke them to the extent they believe that unless they attack with all their power, they’ll have no option but to face ruin. For that purpose, we have the peace envoy bringing a provoking letter.”

“...Please give it some thought.”

Having returned for the day, Imeraria called Debold to her office the next day.

Finally, his own turn has come. Catching a glance of Debold triumphantly striding over towards

Imeraria, Pajou saw him off with a mix of remorse and resolve. It's for the sake of the country!

Understandably, Vichy's central council received the letter Hifumi sent first.

"Hand over Beirevra, huh?"

Scanning over the letter presented by their spy, the elderly council member let out a sigh.

Right now he was the only member in the room. All the other members were spending their time dealing with their own cities. He was called Minoson, a city representative of the city located furthest away from Orsongrande, so after having

gathered an assuring amount of soldiers, he stopped.

The other council members had plans to gather soldiers soon as well but were generally behind schedule. Their territories were whittled away, making it clear that just defending the city would prove hard. The cities near the national border were frantically thinking up any means of defending their cities.

If Minoson's city was attacked, it meant that Vichy would've already collapsed at that point in time. Of course, he wouldn't not make any great effort just because of that. War is unchanging. For the sake of a new era, any powerful people on the losing side would have to be sacrificed. That's just the way it is.

“Even so, this is troublesome.”

The problem was the letter lying in front of him.

Concerning giving up the spy called Beirevra, Minoson was well aware of what had happened over by Arosel. If giving him over would end all this, it would’ve been a good option.

But currently, Beirevra’s whereabouts were unknown.

He was summoned before the council before this letter’s arrival, where he briefed them on the news from Arosel. He was a man past thirty, with a small stature, and facial features giving him a cunning expression.

With the threat of Hifumi approaching Vichy, and himself being summoned, perhaps he suspected something. The second time he was summoned, he never appeared. Other spies looked for him but found nothing.

It's quite unlikely he went towards Orsongrande or the Beast's territory. It would seem natural if he were to use one of the intermediaries he got close to in dealing with the distribution of the magical tools to cross over to Horant. But an inquiry was made, and Horant responded with a formal letter that there were no records of him crossing the border. Minoson didn't believe them at all though.

However, they didn't strongly pursue Horant for that.

After all, if Vichy takes an aggressive stance against Orsongrande, Horant making a display of gathering soldiers it would apply some pressure. A proposal would then have been made so that depending on the situation, both Horant and Vichy would attack, forcing Orsongrande to defend on two fronts at once.

They were allies, although it wasn't an alliance without obstacles. It'd be hard if it was only Vichy, but granted that Horant were to join them, they could turn the tables on Orsongrande.

"Doing that, they will have to wrack

their brains on the spot for a countermeasure."

The council members gathered within two hours. They didn't really have any opposing opinions, so Minoson's plan was approved.

Currently, in accordance with the letter, there are no other alternatives than Vichy unconditionally becoming a vassal state of Orsongrande, or being completely absorbed. For the moment, Vichy won't respond to the demands or talks of reconciliations. They will gather the troops from all their cities and recapture some city-states. After an assured victory, they'd enter negotiations with Orsongrande.

They planned to go all out. As soon as they finished rallying their forces, they would march towards Rhone en masse.

By the time Debold and the delegation representing Orsongrande entered Fokalore, Hifumi had just instructed the dwarfs to construct a protective wall at the city entrance.

When a strange gaudy carriage, followed by around 20 people became visible, the guards and general populace got ready to welcome the incoming noble. Hifumi, however, ignored them and continued talking with the dwarfs.

“So, make some diamond shaped holes in the wall, like this.”

“Is it really okay, making a hole in the wall ?”

“With this interval, you can use bows or javelin-throwing machines to attack. If the holes are too big, they’re useless, so we want them to be just barely big enough to aim through them.”

“Haha, I see.”

While the young dwarf was admiring Hifumi’s knowledge, Debold and company entered the city.

Nevertheless, the soldiers under Hifumi’s leadership were thorough. Even if the traveler came from

within the country, and even if they were an aristocrat, they were to be completely checked.

“How rude! I’m the Müntzer marquis family’s amazing Debold, a peace envoy appointed by her highness princess Imeraria! You lowly soldier bastards have no reason to do an inspection!”

Stopping the carriage, the soldiers were interfered with by the vain Debold, as he shouted at them with an ugly face. They could freely pass all other cities until Fokalore, where they were subjected to a normal inspection, which Debold was dissatisfied with.

Hearing the words ‘Peace envoy’, Hifumi approached the raging

Debold.

“Shut up.”

“Huh, you’re that disrespectful upstart. Heh, if you’re the leader, no wonder your subordinates also behave like this.”

With a broad grin appearing on his face, he tried to make a fool out of Hifumi. However, Hifumi’s facial expression didn’t change.

“This is my city. I’m the law. We don’t know what guys like you are bringing in, so we need to do a thorough search.”

“What kind of absurd thing is that. It’s for bastards like you of low birth. This doesn’t concern me since I am of the Marquises lineage.

Advance."

As he ordered the coachman to continue, before he noticed, a drawn blade was gleaming in front of his eyes. Having drawn closer in an instant, Hifumi's abruptly drawn katana made Debold tremble. His fear filled eyes reflected on the blade.

"Hiii... You bastard, what are you..."

"I said so, didn't I? Here, I'm the law. If you don't abide by the rules, I'll dispose of you as a criminal."

Debold's face flushed. In the end, he didn't resist Hifumi's pressuring and trembled in disgrace. He gave a sidelong stare at the soldier who checked the roof rack's contents on

Hifumi's orders. Without hiding his fury, Debold spoke in a trembling voice.

"You bastard. With what you've just done to me, I hope you're prepared... On her highness princess Imeraria's imperial command, I'm an envoy on my way to Vichy's central government."

Hifumi didn't answer. He was given a small box with a seal on it from the soldier who found it. After carefully opening it, he found a pure white paper inside. This kind of paper was very rare in this world. It was folded and sealed with beeswax.

"That's her highness the princess' handwritten letter! It's not

something bastards like you are allowed to touch!”

Ignoring the screaming Debold, Hifumi took the letter in his hand and held it up against the sun.

“...I see.”

The letter, sealed just as before, was quickly returned to its original place by the soldier.

“That’s enough, go along.”

“Remember this, you low-life. After I’ve fulfilled my mission, I’ll make you regret having that attitude.”

“Is that so? Well, do your best.”

Completely without interest, Hifumi returned to his meeting. All

the while Debold glared at him until he was out of sight from the carriage.

“Hifumi, is that really okay?”

Origa ran over to Hifumi from someplace. A shuriken in her hand, as if she was going to throw it somewhere.

“He’s just a pathetic clown. No need to take him seriously. We probably won’t even meet him again. Leaving that aside, the national border by Rhone will soon become a battlefield again. Rearrange the troops and ready them to leave.”

“You got information that Vichy is going to attack?”

“I guess so. But it seems we still

have time to spare. So let's carefully prepare a welcome party for them. Alright, looks like we'll be busy again."

Of course. they'd have to use the various goods the dwarfs had made. Moving towards the Dwarfs workplace, one idea after another on how to fight against Vichy gushed forth into Hifumi's head.

The premonitions Hifumi had about the war would be slightly betrayed by reality, just two weeks after this day.

Chapter 33: Overjoyed

Returning to the capital and also after completing Imeria's proposal, there was a huge pile of work waiting for Pajou without giving her the chance to take a day off.

Because it was necessary to reconcile the Third Knight Unit with the other Knight Units, many reports had to be submitted to the management department of the royal castle.

The Third Knight Unit's office was next to the royal castle.

It was the place where Hifumi had

come previously to enjoy teatime with Pajou and where the dead Gothras had picked a fight with Hifumi.

Currently, besides Sabnak and Midas, Pajou had assembled the unit members who more or less knew about Hifumi.

“I think that it is a dangerous gamble. At least Vichy hasn’t managed to gather 10.000 to 20.000 soldiers. If they assemble such an amount, it will be unknown whether that man would be able to stop them.” (Midas)

Midas listened to the Imeria’s adopted plan following Pajou’s suggestion. After folding his arms and brooding over it for a short

while, he clearly stated that it would be dangerous.

“Although I understand your anxiety, Midas-senpai, I believe it is a good plan. Even if the military of Fokalore did such a thing like recruiting from the citizens, they won’t surpass 200 either way. No matter how powerful the individual may be, it is pointless with the difference in numbers. Besides, because it isn’t wrong to say that the war was established by Vichy to begin with, it can be said that the part of not particularly antagonizing Hifumi-san is good.” (Sabnak)

Sabnak rebutted Midas’ opinion.

Going by what was talked about

Hifumi, even though the area Hifumi had invaded became unofficially known as “New Territory”, it was decided to call it like that until the current war was settled. As consequence of fulfilling the inhabitants dream of a full day of holiday, they had now become completely full of spirit.

With the pros and cons of the two’s opinions only more opinions rose up, not to mention that all of them weren’t able to agree on one common point either. Since the plan had been accepted by Imeria in the end, in addition to us having to abide to our duty, it could be said that due to our work we have to watch over the state of affairs.

“Rather, I guess no matter the

various things said here in relation to the situation, since the plan has already started it's now too late anyway." (Sabnak)

"That's not quite so. Besides, we have gathered here to discuss about the work from here on." (Pajou)

"From here on?" (Midas)

Seeing that they understood the general state of affairs, Pajou began to talk about the purpose of this gathering.

"Although this a not yet fixed prediction, I think that the stage of the peace talks between Imeria-sama and the Vichy representative will likely become Fokalore or Arosel." (Pajou)

The knight unit's members mostly understood Pajou's prediction.

By no means would either side travel as far as to be close to the other side's capital. Apart from talking about what they will do about the one in the superior situation, it was custom for the peace talks to be held at a place on the winners' side close to the border.

In the current situation, the only difference would be whether it was the new border or the old border. Everyone could agree that it could become either one depending on the postwar circumstances.

"This time the Knight Unit planned to accompany as guards for the

peace talks isn't the First Knight Unit, but us, the Third Knight Unit." (Pajou)

"Us? Not the First or Second?"

"Yes. The First Knight Unit feels like challenging Hifumi. We don't want to unnecessarily provoke him. Furthermore they can't leave from guarding the royal castle which harbors His Highness the prince... something like that will likely put forth as excuse. The Second Knight Unit has the duty of defending the capital. Since there are also some people among the populace using the cover of guarding such conference to incite something, I think the realm would be weakened if they left." (Pajou)

All members had the atmosphere of having understood it and were in an uproar over the excitement of preparing such a big stage.

Even though they were all proud of protecting the royal capital and castle from the shadows, there were only few chances to openly partake in such a big job. Thus it couldn't be helped that they felt enthusiastic about the chance to display their competency either.

But, due to the Pajou's words following afterwards, everyone's excitement instantly subsided.

"Because royalty will join the conference held by the border, it has been decided that a war potential of several thousands will

be taken along, as precaution so to say. And, depending on the circumstances... Hifumi-san will be subjugated." (Pajou)

"Na... what kind of circumstances?"

"Of course you are not to tell a word about this to anyone except those gathered in this place. Those are the plans of Imeria-sama. If he is in a situation of having fallen or a critical condition due to being injured after having successfully attacked Vichy, we are to pretend leading military forces from our side as reinforcements and attack him from the rear." (Pajou)

In the room that ended up sinking into silence, Pajou tasted some black tea to moisten her mouth.

“Only those members present here will march to that area. After everything is finished, it will be announced that he committed suicide due to being driven into a corner.” (Pajou)

“D-Don’t say such absurd things. There is no way that an amount of several people will be able to kill him.” (Midas)

Only Midas had seen his appearance as he simply turned the tables on 10 assassins. Even in his imagination he couldn’t see himself standing up to that in front of his eyes.

“Of course, if he isn’t in a condition to that degree, since the conference is held for the sake of peace

according to the ostensible reason, it will come to a close with the recognition of right to own the territory close to the national border for Hifumi-san. But if the chance presents itself to somehow deal with him as intended by Imeria-sama's plan, I will also support it." (Pajou)

Although having also been helped during crisis, having participated in joint operations for several days and being nobles of the same country, Imeria and Pajou, rather than seeing him as companion, they regarded Hifumi as dangerous.

"Such a..." (Sabnak)

"... If that's Imeria-sama's wish, then I will obey to it. As for myself, I

can only pray that the result will be him settling down in the Viscount territory." (Midas)

Sabnak became speechless due to his considerable feeling of fascination towards Hifumi. Whereas Midas chose to indifferently accept matters.

"But, how will you know in what kind of situation he is? We will end up being sensed before we can approach a visible distance, don't you agree?" (Midas)

"As for that, there is a person I thought of asking for cooperation. If it's her, I don't expect any problems for her being close to Hifumi-san." (Pajou)

“That is…” (Sabnak)

As if he suddenly understood who that person was, Sabnak looked at Pajou with eyes of disbelief.

“Because I am quite aware of something like this being called an act going against humanity, don’t look at me with such eyes. But, there was no other plan I could think of either.” (Pajou)

No one was able to agree or disagree with Pajou in this situation. The meeting of the Third Knight Unit ended.

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After Hifumi and the troops arrived at the new border close to Rhone, ten days had passed.

During that time large parts of the city Rhone had been restructured leaving only the lodging for the soldiers and the fortress at the newly established border.

With the inhabitants annihilated and since the buildings were almost completely undamaged, there were heaps of materials to construct something. As several dwarves were brought along and with the engineering soldiers, there were plenty of hands available.

There was no way that he wouldn't make use of that. Disregarding the border guards dispatched by the capital with a look of suspicion, Hifumi instructed to make changes all over.

No matter how many houses they dismantled, the dwarves and soldiers continued to produce one thing after the other every day even though they didn't quite understand the unclear explanations.

This daily life came to an end on the eleventh day.

Worn-out and sullied Debold came to take refuge in Rhone making sure to cling to his horse.

As he was sheltered by the border guard, immediately a report came in to the person with the highest rank in town, Hifumi.

"Ou, you made it back, huh?" (Hifumi)

Was my prediction off at the time I

saw him off? While laughing he clapped the shoulders of the soldier who came to report.

“If I remember correctly, wasn’t Debold dispatched to prepare the peace talks?”

“Peace? As the central committee of Vichy has no attachment to their fragmented country either, it may be possible to advance the peace talks.” (Hifumi)

At the time he held up the the handwritten letter Debold possessed against the sun, Hifumi managed to steal a peek at a part of the contents. He understood that the contents in this situation could be still judged as lukewarm even though one might call them a

provocation towards Vichy.

“If you thought of that letter being received as means to get along with, I guess that person would have their aspirations being destroyed now.” (Hifumi)

Accompanied by Origa, who wore a face full of questions, Hifumi conveyed to Alyssa to start deploying the soldiers for a quasi-war.

The soldier who came to report departed the room at a quick pace.

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In a building, which was formerly a private house being confiscated to be utilized as office, Debold received medical treatment.

Although one might say that, other than him being fatigued there was no injury standing out. Given that he raised hell over the degree of a trifling scratch, a fake medical treatment was done to the extent of simply coiling bandages.

Debold, whose arms were coiled in bandages, rested on top of a bed. He flared up as soon as he saw the face of Hifumi entering the room.

“I-It’s your fault! Because of you I had to suffer like that!” (Debold)

Returning Debold to the bed after having grabbed him and kicking him in the belly, Hifumi said in a calm voice.

“Concisely report from the start to

the end. Since we have to deal with the situation on this side as well. What happened in Vichy? What about the guards that accompanied you?" (Hifumi)

"Guu~" (Debold)

Relucantly Debold began to talk. Apparently the guards had been completely annihilated.

Debold boldly entered the city Epinaru, where the central committee of Vichy assembled, as messenger. The very same day he obtained the permission to meet with the committee. The next day he was able to talk with each and every member of the committee.

He passed the handwritten letter to

a member of the committee. During the time while the committee members read it, he talked about what a deeply benevolent person Princess Imeria of Orsongrande was making it inevitable for him to obey as loyal retainer bearing such adoration for her. Rudely throwing back the handwritten letter, they were attacked by the soldiers in the assembly hall, he said.

“The committee members of Vichy blamed you, bastard, for coming to this town and slaughtering everyone. No matter whether it was you, son of a bitch, who attacked this town or not, the war will continue as long as Orsongrande doesn’t execute you! You trampled on the kindness of Her Highness... ga?!” (Debold)

Hifumi grabbed the head of Debold, who continued running his mouth in wild agitation, and pressed it against the wall.

“It is particularly convenient for them to lay the blame on me for destroying this town. I guess all of the guards have been killed. What happened to the chamberlains?” (Hifumi)

“I-I don’t know... They remained waiting at the inn because I went to meet the committee... Leaving that aside, r-release me!” (Debold)

As he tried to act violently by struggling, Hifumi’s thumb and little finger dug into the temple of the forehead making a grinding sound. Debold didn’t have any

strength left due to the pain.

During that time, Hifumi pulled out the document protruding from Debold's breast pocket.

It was the handwritten letter which was crumpled before being thrown back.

Quickly opening it with one hand and checking it, it contained Imeria's signature without a doubt. Looking through the content it matched with what he had seen when he held it against the sun.

"This may have usable value from now on. I will keep it." (Hifumi)

"Bastard, this was entrusted to me by Her Highness... ah... aaahhh!" (Debold)

“Your role has come to an end. Since I will play with the guys you lured in from Vichy from now on, an actor who has finished his turn has to promptly leave the stage.” (Hifumi)

While saying this, Hifumi steadily raised the strength he put into his hand. His fingers already broke the temple and sank in.

“Never! ... St-Stop it, don’t, please sto... gu gi” (Debold)

Releasing a wet sound of *gushu* Debold sank into eternal silence.

“Origa. The enemy will be here soon. Go to Alyssa’s place and tell her to begin the military operations and to take their stations.” (Hifumi)

“Roger.” (Origa)

Origa, who watched Debold’s manner of death calmly, left the room quickly.

At the time Hifumi turned his back on the room and left, the soldiers of the border security had already been instructed by Hifumi’s soldiers to take refuge in the fortress.

“Well then, Imeria. It appears that during the time I was in Vichy, Lady Luck has visited that fool. Did my calculations go amiss? Or did you foresee until here? At least, the handwritten letter being here must have been unexpected, I guess.” (Hifumi)

While storing the handwritten

letter in his breast pocket, Hifumi laughed.

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The Vichy soldiers chasing after Debold reached a number of 300.

Knowing the numerical figures of Hifumi's private army being around 100 soldiers, as they had received the intelligence from a spy, the objective was to move the maximum amount of military forces available to immediately move out.

The troops organised and assembled from the committee member's private armies, although they were lacking leadership, the amount of them was quite excessive

for chasing a single enemy.

“Soon we will be at the town Rhone.”

To the adjutant’s words, the man leading the troops as commanding officer silently nodded.

While advancing on horse, this man planned to use this opportunity to take back Rhone.

Even though his order was to chase and arrest the fleeing messenger from Orsongrande, if it happens that his prey takes refuge in Rhone, it was also possible to give the excuse that there was no other way but to retake it.

For the sake of this excuse, he also kept the speed of the pursuit low,

which was the reason why Debold was able to return to Rhone alive.

“Though the town has come into view, there don’t seem to be any guards on watch…”

“It’s the place they insist on being their national border. I guess they will come out from the other side of that gate. Everyone, draw your swords in preparation for combat! We will slaughter the enemies coming out of the gate in one go!”

While listening to the shouts of the soldiers agreeing to his instructions, his expectations got big as he imagined the possibility of him becoming the feudal lord of some city-state if he were to successfully recapture Rhone here.

Those expectations pushed the man's back .

The 300 soldiers formed a line and the first of the vanguard rushed into Rhone.

When about half of them started running, just as the commanding officer decided to advance on his horse, screams began to arise from the leading group.

"What is it!"

A messenger ran up from the front. Because of a rope being stretched across the pathway, several soldiers were tripped up and tread on by those following them resulting in casualties.

"What foolishness! Don't they

watch what's below their feet! Tell them to drop the speed of invasion!"

While raising his voice in anger, the commanding officer thought that it was good that he stayed behind the vanguard.

Falling from the horse to get buried beneath the horse's feet, letting alone the disgrace, he would receive serious injuries and in worst case it wouldn't be unlikely to be killed.

Having the wind taken out of their sails, as they slowly advanced into the city with a large number of people, the Vichy soldiers were dumbfounded when they saw the state of the town.

Even the commanding officer, who was late in entering, was overcome with surprise seeing the strange scene in front of him.

Continuing straight on the main street from the town's gate, there should have been many flourishing stores when the town was filled with people.

As there wasn't a single person there, he understood that this place was deserted.

However, the entrances of all buildings were closed with nailed boards. Even the passages between the buildings were blocked with lumber up to the height of the waist.

It was almost as if telling them that there was only one road in front of them to take.

And, far down the road a single man in unusual clothing was standing about 500 meters ahead of the vanguard.

The man held a thin weapon you could consider to be a sword in his right hand. The man, standing in a relatively relaxed posture, slowly beckoned them.

“Gentlemen of the pursuit party, it’s nice of you to arrive here. It is unnecessary for you to introduce yourselves. Hurry up and come. Since you will be killed anyway.” (Hifumi)

Merely a single man recklessly provoking 300 soldiers, the commanding officer gave the order to advance as he laughed scornfully.

“There is only a single great utter fool! Kill him immediately and use it as chance for our country to counterattack! Go!”

The leading group set up their swords and broke into a run.

This was the beginning of the second massacre carried out at the town of Rhone.

Chapter 34: Highway Star

Stoic stood Hifumi, awaiting the Vichy soldiers in his Hakama and Dougi.

The byroads were blocked off, but he stood on the main—a road eight meters in width where a group could easily surround a man.

Yet Hifumi stood in the middle of it.

He expressed no caution; his eyes simply reflected the scene before him.

And he felt happiness.

Behold how many enemies have come! How many he could slay! This scene, this happiness, surely he could never have felt it were he still in Japan.

As the smile rose on his face, a katana rose in his hands; and with speed of lightning striking from the heavens, with the gentleness of a leaf carried by the wind, the katana was swung down.

「 Huh? 」

The enthusiastic vanguard blinked, unsure of what had happened, but by the time he blinked again he had already drowned in blood. For his face had split open.

Again and again the sound of wind

being cut was followed by shrieks.

A step into his range, and the katana tip would reap your life.

Cut the throat.

Pierce the eye.

Slice open an artery where the armor was weak.

Not once did the katana strike bone or armor.

As mechanically as if doing work, as beautifully as if an artist, he repeatedly carved their bodies from every angle.

「Surround him! Encircle and slay him!」

Their captain barked out orders, and as if snapping out of a trance, the soldiers attacked Hifumi from both sides and the rear.

And yet no one managed to wound him.

A sword only cut air around him; a mace merely struck earth.

「 How can he evade it?! 」

「 Pierce the beast, damn it! 」

「 I don't want to die...! 」

「 T-the blood is not stopping... 」

Hifumi was quite surrounded: some desperately rushing to be killed, others already a corpse, and yet others soon to become a corpse.

The road was dyed red: and to a friend it may even have looked beautiful.

「Fire the arrows」

「Huh?」

「I'm telling you to shoot that monster!」

The captain angrily responded to his adjutant, who could not comprehend such a bizarre order.

「But, we will hit our own if we fire now」

「I don't care. If we don't bring it down, even more will die」

「...Understood」

Curtly replying, the Adjutant offered a prayer and ordered the bowmen to fire.

The arrows, much to the pride of their bowmen, flew tightly together.

Without waiting for the result, the captain began issuing orders to the remaining soldiers.

They were to dismantle the structures blocking the roads and attack the enemy from behind.

He had thus sent a hundred men on this quest.

「No matter how strong he may be, no one can fight this many men」

Ordering the another volley of arrows, the captain was sure of his

victory.

A rain of arrows entered Hifumi's view.

「 Too few. They won't hit 」

Taking but a single step away, arrows landed around Hifumi.

A few soldiers around him were hit, and wallowed in agony.

Those who could still move he disposed of; those who were fatally injured he ignored.

He decapitated those who were hit in the shoulder, and then noticed that the enemy's commander was ordering his men to clear the roads.

「 So they had finally begun 」

And after briefly cutting down a few more Vichy soldiers, Hifumi confirmed that a hundred men had gone off to clear the roads and smiled.

「So the slaughter finally beings? Come, be a man!」

A flash.

Seeing Hifumi decapitate five more men, even the trained soldiers stopped motionless.

Though he was drenched in their blood, he nonetheless pulled out a paper to wipe the blood from his katana, and, after doing so, sheathed it.

「Guess I should clean up a bit」

Darkness spread from Hifumi's shadow and swallowed the earth around him. Hifumi use his darkness magic to dispose of the corposes.

Vichy soldiers were terrified, although it had no effect on them— you can't store away a living thing.

With Hifumi in the center of a sea of darkness, the myriad corpses sunk and disappeared.

As if the battle had never happened.

「Now then, I'm going to go get your captain's head. Do try to stop me please.」

At some point the katana on Hifumi's waist was replaced with a

130 cm long pole.

「It's my first time using this weapon. Surely you won't resent me for not killing you quickly?」

They would probably resent him no matter how he killed him; the few soldiers who remained now had their heads smashed in. As before, they just kept on dying.

But unlike before, Hifumi was slowly walking forward even as he continued to slay countless men.

「Come on, keep the line. Ready your blades... Oh?」

A second rain of arrows has come.

Hifumi twisted the end of the pole, and a chain dangled out from

within it.

With all their men firing in unison, there far more arrows this time.

And while Hifumi was deflecting the arrows with the chain and approaching the Vichy captain, distant screams reached his ears.

Although the blockade was made of a durable material, if many people were to press on it, surely it would eventually fall.

The same occurred, and many soldiers started heading towards the main.

The first among them were the youngest, those unaccustomed to war.

And after a few steps the ground beneath their feet disappeared only to reveal iron and wooden pikes.

Unable to so much as scream their bodies were pierced, and those who fell on top of them rendered fatal their wounds.

Those who screamed were those who fell on top of the young.

This crafty trap was placed past every blockade, and the number of wounded and dead only increased.

Even if they were to take another route, they would only fall prey to another trap.

Surely the number of dead would only number in the dozens, but the objective was not to kill but to stop

their advance.

The soldiers who stopped before the traps were welcomed by a volley of spears flying towards them.

The soldiers were close enough that the spears needed not arch in their path, and many were pierced as a result.

Hifumi's guard appeared from deep within the buildings, as they use the spear-thrower to slaughter Vichy men.

There were few such spear-throwers, so those empty handed followed with bows and arrows.

The roads were narrow, and Hifumi's guards were far; they could leisurely snipe away at Vichy

soldiers. Even more lives were quickly extinguished.

As for the captain, with messengers coming at him to report of ever increasing casualties, and the sight of Hifumi approaching, caused him to lose any remaining composure.

Without waiting for an order, the adjutant commanded all remaining troops to attack the approaching monster. Yet he could not expect many to gather.

And wielding a bizarre staff with chains, a man continued to approach while creating more and more corpses behind him.

「At this rate...」

The adjutant wanted to command

the forces to retreat but then he glanced over the captain.

Would this power-hungry man be able to approve of that decision? Withdrawing now would close the door on his career. But otherwise all would die. Should he withdraw troops even if it means being court-martialed? The adjutant hesitated.

The weapon Hifumi wielded, is a traditional Japanese martial arts weapon from the staff-family: the Chigiriki (Promise Tree). Normally it is made of wood, but it had to be made of metal so as to withstand Hifumi's strength.

With its length coming up to his chest, this weapon which is also sometimes called the Chigirki

(Chest-cutting Tree), has a chain attached to the end of it and a weight attached to the chain. It is like a Japanese chain flail.

The weapon has its perks and demerits, and is rather hard to use; and although it's not Hifumi's specialty, the weapon does allow for a great variety of attacks if you were to mix in Jojutsu* while using it.

* A form of martial art using a cane staff.

For example, crushing somebody's throat and then stepping on their chest so as to stop their heart; or breaking their jaw, forcing them on their knees in tears, and smashing in their heads.

Leaving corpses even more deformed than when he was using a blade, Hifumi hastened his pace towards a gathering of soldiers.

This massacre has yet to end.

「 Captain, we must retreat 」

「 A single man... Are you telling me we lost to a single man!? 」

Scolding his man, the captain desperately asked anyone to kill Hifumi, but the adjutant only sighed.

And after taking a few steps away from the captain, the adjutant called out to nearby soldiers and made preparations to leave Rhone. Captain in his haste did not notice it; but Hifumi did.

The departure of thirty men created an opening.

The captain left understaffed and unprotected, Hifumi charged in

「W-wha.. th...?」

The captain never even had the chance to draw his blade. By the time he noticed he was abandoned, it was too late.

「Die」

With but a single word, Hifumi wrapped the chain around the captain's neck and brought him down from the horse.

Struggle the captain as he might, he could do naught until Hifumi's finger pierce through his eye.

When Hifumi withdrew his hand, the captain (corpse) looked rather amusing.

Seeing their captain killed, the soldiers completely lost their will to fight, and began edging back.

「Your general is dead」

Of course, they would abandon the corpse.

「If you want to run, now would be the time? Desperately run back to your masters and tell them what had happened here. That's if they believe you of course」

Fearing the smile on Hifumi's face, the Vichy soldiers scattered like baby spiders before a predator.

They abandoned their weapons and the wounded too.

Hifumi calmly wandered the field, disposing of any wounded, while his guard was busy burying the bodies.

Those who had recently joined his guard were throwing up with lifeless eyes, while those who had already worked with Hifumi meticulously continued their tasks.

Origa and Alyssa, after issuing the troops orders, rushed over to Hifumi.

After looking at his appearance, Hifumi's face had a bitter smile on it as he wondered how he'd wash all the gore off. He continued to take deep breaths even as he put away

the Chigiriki into his dark storage.

The blood-stained main road soon welcomed a bloody sunset.

With less than a hundred men, Hifumi's guards utterly crushed a force many times larger—in but three days such rumors reached the capital, and the bars were filled with songs of praise for the "Knight of the Slender Sword."

Having witnessed these revelries in the guild, Kasha, who came there to get her quest reward, wandered into the moon-lit street.

She left of her own free will; as an adventurer her life made an about turn and she was rather well off. She also sick of killing people, was

satisfied with her life as a freewoman, dined in fancy and expensive restaurants, and even went out to buy herself a new weapon.

Even so, she occasionally missed Origa.

To her surprise, she rarely thought of Hifumi, but when she did, she would remember his face when he ordered a man to die for her revenge.

When she returned to her room, she turned on the magic tool Hifumi gave her.

Within the four-corners of her small inn room, she collapsed on the bed, feelings of loneliness

overcoming her.

「It's not like I'm in love or anything...」

That line only increased her despair.

Perhaps she was mistaken. Perhaps she should have stayed with Hifumi and Origa. Or, perhaps she should have forced Origa to come with her, even if by force.

As many thoughts and regrets filled her mind, she heard someone knock on the door.

「...Who is it?」

She grabbed a sword and asked.

In response, she heard a familiar

feminine voice.

「It's Pajo. There's something we need to discuss」

「? Why are you here?」

In response to being let in, Pajo flashed an elegant smile.

「It's not that hard to find where you live. I am a knight in charge of protecting this city, after all」

「My, my, how impressive. Now then, what do you need from me?」

As there were no chairs, they sat on the bed and spoke without looking each other in the eyes.

「There's a request for you coming from the Crown」

「The Crown? What could the Crown from a simple adventurer?」

Wouldn't it be better to make a request of the guild, she asked, but Pajo only smiled.

「This is something only you can do」

Without any reservation, Pajo made a single request of her.

「Could you monitor Hifumi-san for us?」

Kasha was silent, and merely blankly stared at Pajo. The smile on her face has long turned serious, and cold, gold eyes stared straight at Kasha.

Chapter 35: Celebrity

After once again rearranging the defense at the national border, Hifumi withdrew to Fokalore. letting the soldiers rest while the spear throwers were repaired and improved.

According to Hifumi's prognosis, if Vichy was really raising an army, they'd need around a month before they arrive.

Even just rallying the troops split up in order to protect all their cities would take a considerable amount of time, and since there isn't a clear head of the state, there will be

disputes regarding who gets to be in command.

Hifumi thought about attacking Vichy while they were slowly assembling their army, but he was busy enough with governing Fokalore. A couple of city-states situated within Vichy, but close to Orsongrande, had shown up to show their allegiance to Hifumi, and it was necessary for him to deal with them.

“Even if they come here, we can’t unconditionally accept them. We’ll soon be continuing our war with Vichy, so any specific exchanges will have to wait until after that.”

“Understood. I’ll convey that to the messengers.”

Origa was the one who interacted with the messengers.

Hifumi could've done it as well, but as there were many things to think about, Origa was temporarily given that role. They can decide what to do after the war is over.

"I don't have the ability to be a politician to begin with. I'm glad I decided to train those civil official slaves ahead of time. If I were to try and gather people now, there wouldn't be any time to sleep."

After seeing Origa off, he stretched out on the reception sofa.

"Hifumi."

Alyssa called out, having smoothly entered the slightly opened door.

Although it's really a breach of etiquette, there wasn't any need to hold back, as Hifumi was already aware of her presence. They had been conducting spy training for a while now though, in order to make her able to slip in and out soundlessly.

"I heard the metallic sound of the door, so you fail."

Since Hifumi's very strict when grading, Alyssa had yet to receive a passing grade.

"Th-that aside, you've got a visitor."

"Who?"

"Well... It's Kasha."

So she came. Without letting Alyssa

see, Hifumi sneered.

“Ehh, the talk about your endeavors have reached the capital. How you repelled Vichy’s army without any losses.”

“Aah, I see.”

After being let through to the reception, Kasha was sitting down, face to face with Hifumi, but the conversation wasn’t continuing.

Within the heavy atmosphere, Hifumi was observing the quiet Kasha as if he could see through her.

“..... So?”

「 Well... Er... 」

As she became flustered, there was a knock on the door, and Origa entered.

“Alyssa told me there was a visitor...”

Discovering Kasha, Origa instinctively stopped, and she quickly lost the smile on her face.

“So you’re here. Take a seat.”

Hifumi deliberately didn’t mention in what seat, nor make any hand gestures.

As Origa unhesitatingly chose to sit down next to Hifumi, Kasha showed a hint of sadness.

“So, what’s your business, coming here?”

“W-well, you see... I’m quite limited working alone as an adventurer, and partnering up with someone else now feels a bit...”

“After receiving such a big favor and selfishly leaving, you think Hifumi will let you back again?”

“Uuu...”

Hifumi was listening to their exchange in silence. If it kept going as it currently was, it would just end with Origa one-sidedly throwing accusations at Kasha, who would end up being chased away. It’s about time to give her some timely help.

“Well, ‘accept those who comes to you, and don’t chase those who

leave', they say. I don't really mind employing you again. We're lacking manpower, after all."

"Hifumi!"

Seeing Hifumi approve as if nothing had happened, Origa clung to him to protest, but Hifumi put his hand on hers to calm her down.

"Your workload has increased considerably. If it's an acquaintance whose abilities you know, it should be easier to divide the workload, wouldn't it? Besides, there's also the next battle. I don't want to work you too hard."

"Hifumi..."

With Hifumi showing concern for her, as well as holding her hand,

Origa blushed.

What an easy to understand person, Hifumi thought, while Kasha raised some suspicions about him, saying such transparent words.

“Well, I won’t reinstate you in the territorial army. Having someone who left just to later return giving orders would be a bitter pill to swallow, right?”

Even if it’s like this, we’ve got to take things like the morale into consideration, Hifumi said with a smile.

“For the moment, I’ll have you be my guard and secretary, so please give me a hand. A room in this mansion will be prepared for you.”

“T-thank you. I’ll do my best, so please take care of me.”

“Right. There is plenty of work to be done, so work hard.”

Calling the maid, Hifumi ordered her to show Kasha her room, before leaving the room with Origa.

“It’s important to meet the other side’s expectations to some extent, at least.”

Although Origa didn’t understand what Hifumi meant, she did understand that his actions were backed up with confidence in something, so she didn’t say anything else.

The news about the annihilation of the pursuit unit from Vichy was

quickly relayed to the central committee from the city accepting one of the fleeing soldiers.

Hearing the news, the committee members who gathered in order to deal with the situation stayed calm.

From the news they've collected about Hifumi, it wasn't a mystery about that they were repelled as the pursuing soldiers only numbered 300. They were, however, dissatisfied with the loss of soldiers due to them fooling around.

"It was a miscalculation by the appointed commanding officer. But it's pointless to place the blame on a dead man."

"But we now know what weapons

they're using, so isn't it fine thinking of this as reconnaissance for the upcoming all-out recapture operation?"

"After all, it's just some troops gathered from small cities. They're able to pursue, but aren't good enough to have serve a purpose on a real battlefield."

Even before Debold came as an envoy, Vichy had decided to resist with force, so everyone calmly accepted that they were going to fight.

"At any rate, that new viscount... Hifumi, was it? That man is dangerous."

"If you look at it from the other

side, if that Hifumi dies, won't we stop Orsongrande?"

"But, the letter was signed by princess Imeraria, was it not?"

Amongst them, there were a couple who had seen princess Imeraria in the past. She had given them the impression of a girl unrelated to politics, and kind towards the populace. But these chains of events in Orsongrande have been sending mixed signals.

They didn't know whether it was because she thought of something after the king's death, or because Hifumi was discovered, but she disregarded the prince who was supposed to inherit the throne, proactively moving the country

herself.

“Either way, like the old man said, if we can stop Hifumi, we can end this without some arbitrary reconciliation.”

“As the goal is to exceed a certain amount of military gains, we need to plan when to request a dialogue.”

“So, about how many soldiers are we going to send?”

In response to that question, the chamberlain who was taking notes distributed a document to all the members.

“15000, huh? The Orsongrande soldiers we need to stop from going from Rhone to Arosel would be the viscount’s territorial soldiers and

the border security, around 200 in total. Isn't this excessive?"

"100 of them crushed our 300 soldiers just about uninjured. We need to leave personnel in the recaptured cities too, so I wouldn't say it's excessive."

"It's better to have some flexibility, but... aren't we just throwing money away?"

Saying that, doubts started appearing in the elderly committee member's head.

(What's Orsongrande's goal with attacking Vichy? To expand their territories? Their official reason is retribution, but it's too severe to just be a matter of honor.)

By no means could he even imagine that it was because of an irrecoverable rift existing between Imeraria and Hifumi.

“No matter how much we rush it, the gathering of the troops will take around 3 weeks. After that, we need to organize them in units, so we need around a month before the recapture operation can be started.

“Hmm. Until then, materials needs to be gathered. How annoying.”

In front of the biggest gathering of troops since the founding of Vichy, the committee was in an uplifted mood. In the place they were normally noisily scrambling for profits, cursing each other, their wishes for victory above profit was

ironically what brought them together.

Until now, the committee's discussions have never proceeded smoothly, so they were having a strange sense of satisfaction.

"Well then, all that's left is to place our hopes in our soldiers."

Everyone nodded, and the meeting was finished.

The room Kasha was shown was on the same level as those Origa and Alyssa were living in.

The room was equipped with a splendid bed, and a low desk. The size of the room was at least three times bigger than the room she was living in at the inn in the royal

capital.

“Somehow, it’s like we’re living in different worlds.”

Sitting down on the bed and mumbling that, the maid who showed her to the room gave her a tour of the mansion, as per Hifumi’s instructions.

Having received a complete restructure, the first floor had a couple of conference rooms and offices, and in order to make the passage through the entrance easier, making more space, it received an expansion. Inside was now a front desk, with five staff members working side by side.

“It looks like at a guild, when they

work side by side like that, but what are they doing?"

"According to Hifumi's instructions, we're registering all the citizens and we're making it obligatory to report births, deaths, and marriages. The reception desk is there to deal with that."

The maid smoothly responded in a flat voice, but you could hear her respect for Hifumi from her way of talking.

"Isn't it difficult to do all of that?"

"If they report that someone was born, or married, we give them some congratulatory money, and in case of death, they receive some monetary condolences. In the

beginning, everyone were sceptical about it, but after generously selling off the mansion's artwork, and the staff members becoming better at receiving them, I heard that most of the citizens are receiving it favorably."

"I see..."

For those who didn't understand what use all this had, the staff members were explaining with a smile on their faces. For the old woman who came to report a relative's death, a staff member was expressing their condolences with a smile, while shedding tears.

Kasha couldn't see it, but behind the counter were the desks of Caim, Brokla, and Paryu, checking that

they worked hard. Because of that, even if they were clumsy, the staff members did their best.

Seeing Hifumi being kind towards the populace like that, Kasha was once again seeing a side of him she hadn't seen before. But isn't this just a camouflage of some sorts? She shifted her attention towards her doubts filled with some expectation.

If Hifumi wasn't a bad person, Kasha wouldn't be able to make herself do it.

"Well then, I'll introduce the second floor next."

After being shown the offices and storage spaces, and led back to her

room, Kasha threw herself on the bed.

The level of injustice has drastically fallen, and without any chaos ensuing, an impartial, yet thorough, system was imposed in a well-organized way. Even Kasha understood all of that.

Although that's how it looks, Hifumi might have some terrifying goal in mind, but after speaking to him face-to-face just now, Kasha couldn't find anything to criticize him for.

As Pajou was sure that just the existence of Hifumi will be the primary factor in wars being caused, she sought Kasha's cooperation. After listening to Pajou

back then, as well as the shock from when Origa chose to stay by Hifumi's side rather than return with her, she accepted. But in reality, she thought that the governing Hifumi was doing was good.

Shaking her head, she dispelled the doubts arising.

"Unless Hifumi does something unreasonable, it won't become my turn. If I think of too many unnecessary things and am driven out, it will all have come to nothing. I should also talk with Origa, trying to reconcile with her."

Besides, she had to start working by Hifumi's side tomorrow. Getting a better than expected opportunity to

observe Hifumi was a stroke of luck. Now, what remains is to work hard in order to not be suspected. Trying to quickly get rid of the fatigue from traveling, Kasha slept until she was called for dinner.

“The slums?”

“Yeah. The creation of the family register is mostly completed, but there’s a problem with the public order in the slums, so it’s difficult for the civil officials to enter.”

Origa explained the information she got from Paryu, the civil official slave in charge of the family register, to Hifumi as he sat by his desk. She didn’t as much as glance on Kasha who stood next to him. Kasha had tried to get in contact

with Origa a few times already, but she was brusquely warded off.

“So there’s an area like that.”

“As long as the city is of a certain size, there will be a slum. Even the royal capital has it.”

The political system, aside from not having created a family register, had plenty of people who were forced out from the sphere of a daily normal life due to crime and poverty. Especially in this world where if you leave the city and stray a little off the highway, the possibility of being attacked by a monster skyrocket.

Slaves and penniless people run away from things like crime,

entering the underworld, which in itself, would employ its inhabitants. Every day, people are dying, but the same amount of new people are streaming in.

“There are many wannabe adventurers, so there will be people undertaking shady jobs the guild won’t accept. Like the “Hidden Serpent” guys you crushed in the royal capital. Those kind of people mostly come from the slums.”

“According to the information collected from people throughout the city, it seems there is a group managing the slums. We don’t know what their numbers are, but they are involved in things like abductions and robberies.”

For now, it seems they were laying low in order to get a grasp on the new lord's attitude.

There had been patrols of a couple of soldiers before, but when the inhabitants of the slum saw the soldiers, they went inside their rows of shacks, and didn't come out, apparently.

They didn't know how big of a population there was there, but if the slums were left alone, wouldn't they once again emerge in the city and commit crimes?

"If I receive your permission, I'll go settle that problem."

"Isn't that a little danger..."

Origa's gaze caused Kasha to turn

quiet.

“Origa, get along a little with Kasha. I might entrust you with work where you need to work together. As for cleaning up the slums, I’ll be doing it.”

“I can’t be causing trouble to...”

“Origa.”

Calling her name, interrupting Origa, Hifumi looked straight at her and smiled.

“This is my job, and it’s something I want to do.”

“...Understood.”

Standing up, Hifumi strapped his katana to his waist, and put on a

mantle on top of his usual clothes.

It was something delivered from the royal castle, to show that you are the lord of a territory. On the left shoulder was the royal family's coat of arms, and on the right shoulder was Hifumi's newly designed family crest. It was a symbol with the motif of a katana and a kusarigama.

"I'm off to the slums. I'll entrust it to you two afterwards."

Seeing off Kasha, and the bowing Origa, Hifumi left the office with a wave of the mantle.

While revising the system to quickly put the territory in order in his head, he then thought about the likely coming counterattack from

Vichy. If Hifumi's estimations were correct, they just had one short month.

"...I must begin doing the preparations in earnest."

As Hifumi was carefully preparing, he felt the same kind of excitement as from the fight in Rhone. This time, is it 10000? 20000? At the very least, he wouldn't be bored. Moreover, under the influence of Pajou, Imeraria's troops might be joining too.

That would be good, so let's give it a go. Hifumi smiled as he walked with light steps, like a beautiful girl who couldn't calm down before a date. The staff members on the first floor who saw Hifumi walk out,

pleasantly thought that him being in a good mood was something nice.

Chapter 36: Take Me Home

While advancing through the city, he firmly affixed the katana to his waist. From his breast pocket he took out a small blade, while spinning it around in a rotating motion on top of his hand, he leaves the residential area.

In order to leave the residential area he passed the buildings of the shopping area arriving at the workshop factory area where the craftsmen were gathered.

Likewise the dwarves, which Hifumi had summoned, were producing the items Hifumi had requested in the

arranged workshops in this area. They worked hard to build the devices aiming to defend the entire city.

Taking the opportunity of going to the slums, he decided to take a peek at the workshops. With Pruflas in the center, they were producing spear throwers, rail cars and the rails used by the rail cars.

Those items finished completely were lined up in a row in the corner of the workshop.

Hifumi entered the workshop while lightly raising his hand in greeting. After counting the number of spear throwers, he told Pruflas that it was fine to stop the manufacturing except for the consumption parts.

“Shall we stop the production of weapon parts? If we amass a great number of these powerful weapons that can be used by anyone, we will be able to kill many enemies, won’t we?” (Pruflas)

“If they can be used by anyone, I think there is no particular necessity for the soldiers to use them. This was arranged in order for the city to be safe even if we weren’t here to protect the city. Just that many is already plenty.” (Hifumi)

“Will Lord-sama use one of those?” (Pruflas)

“Saying such a stupid thing. If possible, I want to kill them with my own hands, otherwise there is

no point in fighting, don't you agree? However, if it's only about winning, Vichy has already lost." (Hifumi)

Gulping repetitively Pruflas ended up remaining silent as Hifumi talked about the details with a serious facial expression.

Although it was said by everyone that wars were desired by the kings and the nobles for the sake of expanding their territories, it was the first time that there was a lunatic starting a war in order to kill people.

"I plan to move the next battleground to Rhone, Arosel and Fokalore. Steadily producing the rails, I aim to lay the rails rapidly

towards Rhone." (Hifumi)

"Roger. I will alter the placement of personnel. If possible, I'd like you to increase the manpower as well ..." (Pruflas)

"If that's the case, please say that to Origa and the civil official slaves. They shall send some people from their staff. Well then, I am off to do some cleaning." (Hifumi)

"Cleaning?" (Pruflas)

"As the feudal lord I have to endeavor in making the life in the city comfortable." (Hifumi)

"Haa" (Pruflas)

Pruflas saw Hifumi off without quite understanding what he

meant. Organizing the things said just now within his head and thinking about the placement of personnel, he realized something.

“Arosel after Rhone, Fokalore was it? What kind of situation causes him to push his plans this rapidly? Does Feudal Lord-sama consider losing the current war?” (Pruflas)

Is Fokalore the final defense line that will stall the enemy with spear throwers waiting for reinforcements?

Since he didn’t comprehend even if he thought about it and there was no other choice but to rely on his talent in producing things anyway, he decided to start the production of the requested rails.

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With passing through the workshop area, there were disposal areas with a lot of thrown away trash.

Most of the remains were clothes and wood. As it seems that metal was valuable, it couldn't be found there.

Among those you could likewise see the bones of animals and some human bones thought to be clothes.

As that place gave off a stench, no one approached it except for the the workers and servants from some place to throw away trash

occasionally.

Between the mountains of garbage a narrow pathway ran through coming out next to the slums.

“I guess the smell will stick to the dougi. When I get back I will have to thoroughly wash it.” (Hifumi)

Hifumi fervently believed it to be indispensable drying the dougi in the shade after hand-washing it in lukewarm water. Even as he became the feudal lord, he still washed the clothes himself.

Although there also was the situation of Origa gently telling him to leave it to the maids, this was something he didn’t yield on.

Even the gauntlet produced by

Thorn, he thought it to be considerably exhausting to maintenance it. While care-freely walking Hifumi knew through his senses of the two people concealing themselves ahead of the path.

Moreover, those two people ahead stood up.

<Although I guess it is fine to decide on a pincer attack, but hiding themselves within the trash? ...> (Hifumi)

Hifumi drew the katana heaving a sigh. Going towards the presence of the two hidden in the trash, he stabbed them one by one.

There was a feedback.

I think it was instant death for both

of them as they didn't even leak a voice.

After pulling out the katana, it was covered with a red liquid.

"Wh-What have you done!"

Two people ran up from further down the path seeing Hifumi's sudden action.

Frantically pushing the mountain of trash aside, the two were surprised to find the limp corpses.

"Despite doing nothing, they were stabbed without warning ..."

I guess both, the ones having run up here and those having died, are in the latter half of their teens, huh?

It seems one of the dead was a woman.

Even as he is showered in accusing gazes, Hifumi isn't concerned in the least.

"They tried to do something. Don't play the victims if you get counter-attacked." (Hifumi)

"What was that! Although they only planned to threaten you a bit, I will kill you?!"

"Baka" (Hifumi)

The youth, who flared up at Hifumi in rage, died having his heart pierced.

"If you threaten with words saying you will kill someone, be prepared

to the extent of resolving the situation with force. It is only ridiculous if a person soon to die says such things." (Hifumi)

As he was preaching facing the corpses, Hifumi turned his gaze towards the sole survivor. He was unable to stand trembling in fear.

"Th-This easily..." (Young man)

"I have trained desperately to be able to kill this easily. Leaving that aside, I want you to tell me. How many people live in the slums ahead from here?" (Hifumi)

"I-I don't know! Because there are as many entering as there are those dying before anyone knows..." (Young man)

Using a shrill and nervous voice, it seems he also became incontinent.

“Well then, is there a guy similar to a boss who brings the slum together?” (Hifumi)

“To-Torkemada-san (T/N: >> Torukemada <<), you mean? If it’s that guy, his stronghold is in the church ruins! I-I beg you, don’t ki...” (Young man)

Without listening to the end, Hifumi decapitates the young man.

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“The church ruins, huh?” (Hifumi)

Exiting the trash mountains, a city with worn-out, decaying houses lined up came into view.

Although almost all of them were miserable shacks having their roofs collapsed or completely missing, judging by the presences, it seemed as if a limited amount of people was living there.

Additionally there were hardly any people walking outside.

While feeling the vigilant looks, a building with a different structure became apparent as he nonchalantly walked the the little rest of the path ahead.

It was weathered with its triangular interior and the roof which was

spherically cut like an object of art.

“Is this the church by any chance? Which reminds me, I haven’t heard about something like the religion of this world. I will try to ask Origa next time, huh?” (Hifumi)

As usual, Hifumi relied on Origa for the knowledge concerning this world, but since Origa will likely be delighted about the question, I guess it is fine, he thought.

Approaching the building appearing to be the church, a group of ten-odd men came out surrounding Hifumi.

All of them frivolously held rusted weapons glaring at him with rough looks.

“Thank you for the trouble of receiving me. Who of you is called something like ‘Torkemada’?” (Hifumi)

He asked without even putting his hand on the katana.

“What’s your business with Torkemada-san? You are wearing strange clothes. Who are you bastard?” (Mob Character A)

“Are those the church ruins?” (Hifumi)

Ignoring the man who asked the questions with saliva flying all over, Hifumi pointed at the building in front of him.

“What about it!” (Mob character A)

“I just wanted to know.” (Hifumi)

He turned into the direction of the previous man twisting and turning around a round small sharp blade.

“Ha?” (Mob character A)

Faster than he could react, the iron wedge was driven into his chin. Besides ripping off the jaw joint, it broke the lower jaw into two pieces.

Without even time for fainting in agony, Hifumi seized his face and crushed the skull, killing him the process.

“Th-This guy!” (Mob Character B)

“Kill him! This fellow is dangerous!” (Mob Character C)

“Something like being dangerous... excuse me for that.” (Hifumi)

Saying this while pouting and complaining, he threw the small blades at their bosom. Drawing the katana and attacking in the same stroke, he sliced the throats of two people in one go.

Pulling it back in the time the two created a fountain of blood, he pierced the neck from behind of yet another person.

“St-Stop ...” (Mob Character D)

Kicking the feet of a man throwing down his weapon and trying to flee, he tread on the face around the part of the eyes and broke the skull of the man having fallen down on the

spot.

He dodged the sword of the man approaching from his rear causing him to involuntarily thrust the point of his sword into his companion who had his back turned towards him causing his companion to die.

Likewise another person was slain as he put his back into pulling out the sword.

Watching their companions getting killed one-sidedly, the remaining people unconsciously took a step back into the rear.

“Look! There are still another 9 people left, isn’t that right?” (Hifumi)

Breaking into a refreshing smile, he decapitated one more person.

Catching the wrist of a man brandishing his sword, he twisted it and used the man's own blade to slice his neck.

The person, who was made stumbling by kicking the dead body at him, had his brain stabbed through the eyeballs on the spot when he raised his face.

"It's enough already, please stop!" (Mob Characer E)

"Not happening. Die." (Hifumi)

"Ple..." (Mob Character E)

His pleading for his own life was denied with a single word.

The pitiful man passed away having his skull cut apart down to the nose.

At the time that man collapsed with his eyeballs spilling out on both sides due to the impact of the slashing attack, someone came out of the church.

“That’s enough!”

A man of approximately 40 years having a thoroughly tempered stature appeared.

Carrying a large, well-maintained sword on his shoulders, he advanced to the front of the church which was scattered with dead bodies.

Hifumi, feeling that presence,

wrapped it up by cutting the femur of a person and throwing him down.

At the moment the man raised his voice in order to restrain him, Hifumi aimed at the carelessness of that other man ceasing his movement and now that man was helpless.

Hifumi waited for him to die from blood loss as he sank in his own pool of blood.

“This! What are you!”

As Hifumi continued to kill even more without even listening to the restraint, the disturbing man drew his sword and went around in front of Hifumi, parrying Hifumi’s

downward swung katana.

“Hou ...” (Hifumi)

In the case of the other guys tattered swords those were cut apart disregarding the slashing attacks. But, while the katana penetrated halfway into the thick sword blade of this sword, it was also stopped.

“In spite of being this thin, what a strength!”

Desperately enduring the unusual pressure, the man gritting his teeth was sent flying with a kick into his abdomen making him tumbling on the ground.

Hifumi’s curiosity was slightly piqued by the man who quickly

stood up and fixed his sword stance.

“You are different from the other trash. This bunch has a slightly capable fellow mixed in, huh?” (Hifumi)

“You aren’t someone from the slum? What the hell is your business here?”

“I came here to meet the manager. Then, since these belligerent guys came and surrounded me, I killed them.” (Hifumi)

‘It’s simple.’ Although he was laughing, Hifumi didn’t relax his force to pin him down with the katana even a tiny bit.

Even the surviving men had no other choice but to observe from

the distance.

“That Bifron-san (T/N: >> Bifuron <<) is ...” (Mob Character F)

From their mutterings Hifumi learned the name of the man in front of him.

“Wa-Wait! If you have conditions, I will listen to them. I am sorry for our underlings causing you trouble!” (Bifron)

Upon Bifron’s words, Hifumi all of a sudden withdrew his katana.

In contrast to Bifron, who was breathing heavily, Hifumi didn’t have a single pearl of sweat.

In addition to his ability, even his mentality is that of a monster,

Bifron thought.

The fallen corpses of his companions in the vicinity had no needless injuries, there were merely the attacks necessary to kill them visible.

No hesitation could be seen.

“Let me meet the manager of this place.” (Hifumi)

“... I understand. Follow me.” (Bifron)

Bifron had no choice to waver on whether to take the man in front of his eyes to Torkemada’s place or not.

He judged it to be better to take him there rather than having everyone

here getting killed.

Telling the surviving bunch to clean up the corpses, Bifron stepped into the church ruins leading Hifumi.

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Other than in regards to Imeraria's life, the Third Knight Unit played a leading part in the advancing plans for the troops organisation at the royal castle.

Those were reinforcements readied under the pretext of supporting Hifumi's territory as well as the new territories against Vichy who was thought to start an offensive.

In anticipation a number of around 5000 soldiers was prepared and they began their march after having been assigned in units to each, Pajou and Midas.

Although Imeraria had to handle the governmental affairs, she also actively interfered with the army.

As the troops were usually led by a soldier, the Second Knight Unit didn't find this very amusing.

Even if she was the princess, a woman meddling with the military and naval affairs, the top brass of the Second Knight Unit wasn't able to stomach that.

"By all rights, we of the Second Knight Unit should be expected to

become the bellwethers of the battle." (Captain)

An elderly man, having his own personal office with the King's castle, calmly said this. It is Stifels (T/N: >> Sutiferusu <<) who is the head of a earl household and employed as captain of the Second Knight Unit.

The ones standing at attention and listening to that speech are the two existing vice-captains.

"It is as the captain says. Originally, if it was by the king's order, it would be a logical move for us to lead the soldiers as they head into battle!" (Vice-Captain A)

"Be that as it may, as the king has

passed away and the prince still hasn't finished the coronation yet, isn't she abusing her authority with this?" (Vice-Captain B)

Same as Stifels, both vice-captains also seemed to obviously bad-mouth the Princess' judgement.

Having said that she was abusing her authority, in reality there were no clearly stated regulations in regards to the chain of command within royalty or the roles of the Knight Units.

With the queen wasting away and the prince also being too young, there was likewise a valid reason for Imeraria taking a leading role in carrying out the governmental affairs. Especially for that reason

the royal castle also kept functioning without problems.

Due to the civil officials and their-likes understanding this, they followed the Princess' instructions obediently.

But, military and naval officers seemed to have a tendency to be obstinate where customs were concerned. While the Third Knight Unit, who originally belonged to the Princess faction, was fine with the pliable support, the First and Second Knight Unit, whose treatment became worse by each day passing, bore resentment in opposition.

"You-know-what, I think the lass only gathered the soldiers for the

sake of looking cool in front of the guy she fell in love with. It is even fine for her to get along with the cowards from the Third Knight Unit in that game of fake campaign." (Vice-Captain A)

"However, as things are going, since the Third Knight Unit will increase their achievements once again..." (Vice-Captain B)

The Second Knight Unit was impatient. The Third Knight Unit's achievements rose with such things like the smuggling affair of the Marquis solidifying their high estimation and connection with the Princess. In comparison to that, the Second Knight Unit wouldn't be able to obtain any achievements this time either.

As the Second Knight Unit's reputation took a huge blow with not being able to protect the king and as there was also the matter of disposing the problem child called Gothras who was affiliated with the Second Knight Unit, they were disgruntled as they weren't given any place to participate actively in the first place.

"The reinforcements together with the military forces of the territories amounts to about 5000 troops. Vichy will come to recapture the territories using all its strength. Although it might be possible to stop a defeat, something like an overwhelming victory will be impossible. This isn't anything to be anxious about. Also, apart from that, we should be able to appear on

the stage to earn the victory."
(Stifels)

"The stage aiming for victory, is it?"
(Vice Captain A)

Passing the two vice-captains a signed decree close at hand, Stifels stood up.

"Right now it has become a standoff with Horant at the national border. Let's show them that we can handle enlarging the realm as well, shall we not? It isn't something that can only be done by that greenhorn, I will show the proof of that."
(Stifels)

"That's right!" (Vice-Captain A)

"As one would expect of Your Excellency! You have a totally

different point of view than us!” (Vice-Captain B)

While the two vice-captains were severally praising him, Stifels nodded in response and declared with a bold attitude,

“Gather the soldiers! The true strength of the Second Knight Unit shall resound within Orsongrande, no, in the whole world!” (Stifels)

Watching the figures of his subordinates hurrying to organize the troops with exalted facial expressions, Stifels nodded in absolute satisfaction.

Chapter 37: Candy

Entering the ruins of the church, inside a spacious hall, where the altar originally stood, there was a middle-aged man sitting in a huge wooden chair, surrounded by several standing men. Probably his subordinates.

Bifron jogged forward, whispering something in the ear of the middle-aged man.

Having listened to what Bifron was saying, the man rudely looked at Hifumi, and started talking in a deep, resounding voice.

“It seems some of our guys are indebted to you, but who are you?”

(Torkemada)

“The new Lord. Are you Torkemada?” (Hifumi)

“Correct. So, what business does the Lord have, coming all the way to our garbage heap?” (Torkemada)

Torkemada glared with bloodshot eyes. He had probably been able to daunt many people with that gaze, but Hifumi didn’t really care.

“I came to ask you whether you want to die, or follow my orders.” (Hifumi)

“Hah.” (Torkemada)

Laughing scornfully, Torkemada put a nearby wooden flask towards his mouth. The content smelled like

alcohol.

“I heard you were the manager here in the slums. I was thinking of gathering the inhabitants here and have them choose whether to submit or not.” (Hifumi)

“Hahaha, don’t be so hurried, youngster. So, what will you do if I don’t obey? Set the soldiers after us to kill us? There was an aristocrat making the same demands before, but we sent him home as a corpse.” (Torkemada)

Speaking in a joking manner, the surrounding subordinates started laughing.

Hifumi didn’t respond, or rather, he didn’t really listen to what

Torkemada said.

“I don’t care about that. Just do it. Also, you smell. You should at least wash your body.” (Hifumi)

Hifumi frowned, waving his left hand around in an imitation of Torkemada. Torkemada himself stopped laughing, and put on a grim look.

“That’s the kind of serious look you should listen with. This is the moment where your life or death is decided.” (Hifumi)

“Don’t get carried away. Don’t think a youngster like you can act brave here in the slums, and then return in one piece.” (Torkemada)

He once again threatened in a deep

voice, but Hifumi only responded with a sigh.

“I can’t get through to you, can I?” (Hifumi)

With a rattling sound, Hifumi retrieved the metal chigiriki he used in the battle in Rhone. Although, the retractable function for the chain had broken, so it was more like a flail with a long handle. As he couldn’t fix it on his own, he could only use it as it was for now.

“Oh, you want to fight?” (Torkemada)

Judging that it was a weapon, Torkemada grinned broadly and turned to Bifron standing beside him, about to tell Bifron to be

Hifumi's opponent.

The chigiriki made a dull sound as its weight was driven into his temple.

Hitting the weak part of the cranium and continuing straight ahead, it clearly reached his brain.

"Move before you ask someone whether to fight or not. Idiot." (Hifumi)

Hifumi nimbly pulled back the chain and swung it around, as Torkemada fell down from from his chair with the whites in his eyes showing.

The underlings couldn't understand what happened for a short moment, but came to their senses as they

heard the sound of the dead body hitting the floor.

“You asshole! Kill him!” (Mob A)

“Wait!” (Bifron)

As the subordinates were about to draw their swords, Bifron hurriedly commanded them to stop.

“Why are you stopping us!?” (Mob A)

“Bifron, he killed Torkemada! We can’t let him go back alive!” (Mob B)

“Even if we attack in a group, we can’t win. Torkemada died because he didn’t understand that... Lord, could you please give us your name?” (Bifron)

Having somehow calmed down the subordinates voicing their dissatisfaction, Bifron showed that his hand had separated from the sword.

“It’s Hifumi. Your manager has died, so Bifron, can you substitute for him?” (Hifumi)

“Manager… well, he only managed the people here. As we don’t have a grasp on the huge number of people in the slums, we don’t know where people are.” (Bifron)

“Aahh… So it’s like that. What a bother.” (Hifumi)

Hifumi scratched his head, shaking the chains. The listless Bifron took that moment to quietly ask him a

question.

“I’d chose to follow you over dying. If I weren’t going to follow you, will the soldiers come again?” (Bifron)

Torkemada was talking as if he was filled with composure, but during Viscount Hagenti’s rule, soldiers were dispatched to the slums. They had huge losses, and while they managed to drive back the soldiers with force in the end, a considerable amount of people in the slums died. Only after running around, confirming that all the influential people back then had died, did Torkemada start behaving like the boss of this gym. And since joining an appropriate group makes it easier, Bifron had joined Torkemada.

If soldiers were now dispatched like they were back then, the people in the slums would easily be disposed of.

“Why are you asking whether I’d send soldiers?” (Hifumi)

“Well, nobles and Lords are like that, so I figured…” (Bifron)

Bam. The sound of the chigiriki hitting the floor made Bifron take a step back in surprise.

“If someone obstructs me, I have the the privilege to kill them. I won’t let anyone else take that away from me.” (Hifumi)

Everyone in the church ruins felt as if asking what the hell Hifumi was talking about.

Although nobody, even Origa, comprehended it, it was the same reason why Hifumi stood on the main street in Rhone by himself.

He even gave such strange order saying that it was alright to only kill those guys who entered the side roads.

“I don’t understand the minds of guys who use their subordinates to kill people.” (Hifumi)

Hifumi angrily snorted with a “fun~” as no one kept up with him.

“The conversation has deviated. As it has become tiresome, I will leave it to you afterwards. Tomorrow morning, those who obey me will lose the status of trash, the others

will have to get out. Those remaining in the city will be killed. I think that's easy enough to understand." (Hifumi)

"W-Whether they are going to believe this story or not ..." (Bifron)

"It doesn't matter. It will be their end if they aren't able to sense the danger." (Hifumi)

Biding his farewell, Hifumi gave them a light greeting of "see ya tomorrow!" as if he was a student while leaving. Bifron sank to the floor with a thump.

"Bi-Bifron-san ..." (Mob A)

"You lot better obey him as well if you don't want to die. This here are the slums. You will die if you

insist." (Bifron)

Seeing him having his view facing towards Torkemada, the other men one by one told Bifron that they would obey.

Apparently it was the simple logic of obeying Bifron who is stronger than them.

"Ah, will we keep this a secret from the other groups so that we can comfortably get rid of the guys from the other groups?" (Mob B)

As several others agreed to that sort of idea being proposed, Bifron told them to better stop it.

"What do you think will that Lord-sama do at the time he learns that we hadn't passed on the

announcement to the other groups?" (Bifron)

Standing up, Bifron looked at everybody.

"Didn't you listen? Anyone who becomes an obstacle will be killed by that guy." (Bifron)

As Bifron left the church ruins to go inform the other groups, the other guys also tagged along.

◆◇◆◇◆

The expression 'civil official slave' is a word coined by Hifumi. With the exception of Fokalore it hadn't

circulated yet.

Although their position as slaves, and their status as civil officials made the people confused in the beginning, but when they started actually working, they just said “ah, so that’s what the expression means”, and understood.

With the administration service being completed, the war reserve funds could be definitely collected under the name of taxes. Other than Kasha’s principle of saying “something is wrong with these people”, only the 5 civil official slaves were put to work like slaves just as that title implied.

The result of tallying the family register was the knowledge of there

being close to 50.000 people in Fokalore even if the slums were excluded. Although there were dozens of staff members, only 5 people managing the government affairs by themselves doubtlessly was a matter of overwork.

Attached under Alyssa, Miyukare took part in the office work on matters closely related to the territorial army. She considered that to be an especially comfortable situation for herself.

In reality the management related to armament was easy too as the loss was originally small as well. Before Hifumi became aware of it, the method to learn how to use the tools and arms made by the dwarves became difficult as those

were unfamiliar.

For the women who served as civil officials in the capital this was a new workplace supported by a peaceful environment without having superiors that acted self-important or nobles making fun of them for being women of common birth.

“A-Ano ... Miyukare-san, I don’t understand this, but ...” (Alyssa)

Alyssa was scanning through the documents as if clinging to the massive desk in the office with its long fur carpet spread out. Someone who came approaching with a *tota tota* timidly held out the documents to Miyukare at her secretary desk.

“Alyssa-sama. You asked for the subordinate standing in front of me, right? You have to be prepared to entrust substantial things to those below as one standing above others.” (Miyukare)

“A-Ano … I am sorry …” (Alyssa)

Alyssa got openly depressed as she was lectured while receiving the documents.

You could see her already small body becoming even smaller.

“Moreover, because the document is incorrect here regarding the count of people, it can’t be used as final count. Since there aren’t 200 people with even the recruited soldiers, you have to understand at

least this much, please." (Miyukare)

"A..u ..." (Alyssa)

As it was something possessing comparatively strong backbone, Miyukare saw Alyssa ending up completely dispirited.

She tightened her face, that almost began to grin, with will-power, placed a hand on Alyssa and changed to a soft voice.

"Alyssa-sama, I am very sorry for saying such harsh things. But it is fine to leave such miscellaneous tasks to me." (Miyukare)

"But, if that's the case, I think it will become difficult for Miyukare-san ..." (Alyssa)

What a lovely child. It took Miyukare all her effort to withhold the nosebleed due to Alyssa who wasn't even ten years younger than her. Barely, without revealing her facial expression, she pretended to be calmly thanking her.

"Such a lowly slave like me receiving such consideration, thank you very much. I was appointed as Alyssa-sama's assistant. Since this is my duty, please rely on me without holding back." (Miyukare)

"Is that so? ... Although I don't quite understand, thanks Miyukare-san!" (Alyssa)

As she endured with a mind of steel to not embrace the brightly smiling Alyssa closely, Hifumi entered the

room without even knocking.

Of course he had taken a hot bath and changed the dougi smelling like garbage.

“Ah, Hifumi-san!” (Miyukare)

“... Don’t leak such sickening mood.” (Hifumi)

“Ara, you can say that it is an important element for smoothly handling the work that the subordinate and the superior get along with each other.” (Miyukare)

Hifumi wasn’t good at talking with Miyukare.

As she didn’t even care about speaking her mind without holding back even though being a slave, he

felt some indescribably bad affinity with her.

(I think I am to blame for not seeing through such a fellow, but ...) (Hifumi)

Her hobby doesn't match her high-quality, Hifumi recognized about Miyukare.

Standing out in calculation and practical work experience amongst the 5 people, she is the most "capable personnel" since she also possesses experience as civil official, he assessed.

"How can I help you, Hifumi-san?" (Miyukare)

"Since I will clean out the slums tomorrow, you have to assign a

number of people to prepare dealing with the aftermath." (Hifumi)

Miyukare's side reacted sensitively towards Hifumi's words.

"... Have you done something again?" (Miyukare)

After the defense battle at Rhone, they had reorganized the territorial army, reviewed the weapons damage and ordered repairs and brand new ones.

Furthermore while being rushed by Caim of the financial affair department, they calculated the final expenses. Miyukare recalled the situation of not even having time to sleep.

“You just have to gather some manpower. Take someone being in charge of the family register including around 20 people and wait outside the slums to register those guys as residents tomorrow morning. Assign an appropriate workplace like a workshop or whatever.” (Hifumi)

This will reduce the labor shortage, because of that Hifumi had a complacent mood. Miyukare was at her wits’ end.

“Will it prove successful to use the guys from the slums?” (Miyukare)

“This will depend on your guys’ education. I leave it to you, military director Alyssa” (Hifumi)

“Ah, yes! Understood!” (Alyssa)

After hitting Alyssa’s head with a *pon pon*, Hifumi immediately left.

“Again a troublesome matter …” (Miyukare)

Although her deployment was like playing house, given that for some reason the soldiers of the territorial army listened well to the things Alyssa said, there were only few troubles in relation to the soldiers of this territory.

A large number of people grasped the situation of Alyssa, who was moving around her small body restlessly, having no dignity and yet she oddly excelled at something like issuing quick instructions.

Even if it might be fine because of Hifumi's discerning eye, Miyukare absolutely couldn't accept it since it was somehow vexing.

"Well then, we should prepare to meet the Lord-sama's unreasonable demands." (Miyukare)

"Miyukare-san, you are not allowed to speak bad words about Hifumi-san in such way, okay?" (Alyssa)

"... I am very sorry. My true opinion leaked out." (Miyukare)

How could such excellent child become emotionally attached to such bloodstained man? Miyukare was boiling with jealousy.

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It was the time to finally decide the details of the troops organisation fielded against Vichy when a letter from Horant to Imeraria arrived.

Looking at the delivered documents which took a full 5 days to arrive from the city closest to Horant, Imeraria held the middle of her forehead feeling a headache.

“Imeraria-sama?” (Pajou)

Due to the anxious words, Imeraria raised her face and looked at Pajou.

“Pajou, it is written here that Horant claims the massive killing of citizens in Rhone to be the

responsibility of our country. However going by the details I read in your report the cause was apparently some magic tool from Horant." (Imeraria)

"I swear that there are no lies to be found in the contents of the report you have received from me ... Will Horant cooperate with Vichy?" (Pajou)

"It seems so. Although I think it won't come as far as an invasion because they have to ascertain the validity of Vichy doing something like "Revenge" against our country going by the contents of the letter ... I wonder whether I should gather some soldiers on the main road on Horant's side just to be sure." (Imeraria)

In spite of being remembered of a certain person being first on the list of many hot-blooded people causing many to be troubled while Imeraria was worried, Pajou drew close all of a sudden.

“However, regarding this matter, there is movement to dispatch troops in the direction of Horant in the name of Captain Stifels of the Second Knight Unit.” (Pajou)

“What is he selfishly …” (Imeraria)

“That is, it seems he spread a rumor of having somehow obtained the approval from Prince Ayperos (T/N: >> Aiperosu <<)” (Pajou)

Imeraria learning that the name of her younger brother was used

without the person himself even knowing about it had a hunch that he wouldn't comprehend it even if she explained it to him.

Although she was an amateur as well, this was even more so the case for the prince, who doesn't know a thing about military affairs.

Unrelated to the royal castle's intentions, different to Imeraria who had been moving for the sake of the masses, it resulted in him almost never leaving the castle under the protection of his mother. Even Imeraria was surprised at the degree of him being raised ignorant of the ways of the world.

For this reason, even if her younger brother inherited the crown, she

considered to support him herself.

“With all due respect, it appears the prince faction is opposed to the matters of the princess who is thought to be intimate with Hifumi-san ...” (Pajou)

“I have no intention to compete for the hegemony with my younger brother.” (Imeraria)

“I-I am very sorry. I have said too much.” (Pajou)

Being slapped with a warning, Pajou hurriedly shut up.

“This before an important battle. I don’t want to cause unnecessary losses. I don’t want to expand the disputes within the king’s castle either. Let’s do it in the way I

ratified this time. But, you should do your best to draw in the capable talented people amongst the soldiers into the Third Knight Unit." (Imeraria)

"I will obey respectfully." (Pajou)

"... Though there is something I am thinking about, in the end it has become nothing but completely brutal matters. Even though I wanted to take care of the life of the people becoming a lot calmer until just a little while ago." (Imeraria)

Now she was only thinking of wanting to start moving quickly against Vichy. Imeraria gently covered her eyes with her slender fingers.

Chapter 38: Sunday Morning

Wrapped in the refreshing morning sunlight, a huge group of slightly dirty people were restlessly gathered. They were those who listened to Bifron's call and exited the slums.

Listening to Bifron, whose strength was recognized within the slums, and seeing his proof in the form of Torkemada's corpse, a little less than 150 people had gathered and followed the trash-filled street, and exited the slums. Although there were a lot of men as well, almost all the women and kids had come out. They didn't have either the power

or the intention to go against the lord.

Bifron and his comrades who had been running around the slums for the whole night, were completely exhausted. But once they thought about what would happen from now on, their tension and sleepiness was blown away.

“Good morning!” (Alyssa)

Amidst the noisy conversations expressing their uneasiness, a loud cheerful greeting was heard.

As he looked over, Bifron could see a young lady walking over, waving her hands. Behind her were many men and women looking like government officials, as well as

several soldiers.

“Old man, you and the rest of the people are those who exited the slums, right?” (Alyssa)

“Ah, yes.” (Bifron)

“I’m the military director in this city, Alyssa. Hifumi told me that I’ll be here to receive you. I want the men over there, the women over there, and the kids, along with their mothers, over there.” (Alyssa)

As she was giving instructions to Caim, Origa, and the other responsible people in order to quickly move along, a man stepped out from behind Bifron.

“If this is a joke, listening to a small kid like you, I’m not laughing! Don’t

make fun of us just because we're from the slums!"

It was the same man who first raised his voice in rage when Hifumi killed Torkemada.

"Eh... But..." (Alyssa)

"Considering Bifron's face, just obediently get out of here. We don't have any reason to get along with some kid's play."

Drawing closer, Alyssa hesitantly looked behind her, and saw Origa give her a nod, as she stood with her arms crossed, with a daunting pose.

"Uhh... There!" (Alyssa)

Under the pressure of Origa's gaze,

Alyssa resolved herself and swung the tobiguchi she held in her hand.

Swinging down, with her eyes relatively closed, the pointy end of the tobiguchi accurately pierced the middle of the head.

“Like that.” (Alyssa)

Standing aside Alyssa, Origa slowly talked to the frightened citizens.

“The people going against our lord Hifumi’s intentions will be dealt with. As we aren’t planning on keeping unnecessary baggage, we need to deal with it. If you understand, then quickly move as we told you to.” (Origa)

Within the ambiance not expressing either consent or refusal,

even Bifron remained silent, while the men went towards their gathering place.

“Alyssa, you did that well. There’s no need to listen to what guys like him are saying.” (Origa)

“I wonder if that really was a good thing ...” (Alyssa)

Origa gave a kind smile to Alyssa, who still didn’t have any self-confidence.

“Have some self-confidence. You just dealt with one of Hifumi’s enemies, after all.” (Origa)

“T-that’s right!” (Alyssa)

They brought about a peaceful atmosphere, but the people around

them looked at them with fear in their gazes.

At this point, Hifumi came walking completely relaxed.

“Oh, you’ve already started talking?” (Hifumi)

“You’re slow, Lord.” (Myukare)

As Myukare, who came with Alyssa, said that, Hifumi let out a big yawn.

“I was talking with Pruflas last night and we got a bit excited, so it ended up being quite late. Don’t glare at me just because I overslept a bit.” (Hifumi)

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“Hifumi, leave this to us.” (Origa)

“Yeah, I’ll leave it to you. Well then, I’ll be tidying up the rest. Alyssa, send some people to clean up around dusk.” (Hifumi)

“Understood!” (Alyssa)

So that’s the Lord? The residents from the slum were talking to each other. After Alyssa clapped her hands to get their attention and once again gave them directions, the remaining people quickly began to move.

“Origa, as planned, the men will help Pruflas. The women will help the staff members, and you’ll be educating the kids.” (Hifumi)

“Understood. You take care as well.” (Origa)

Lightly waving his hand towards towards Origa who was doing an elegant bow, Hifumi went towards the road to the slums.

“Hifumi, what exactly did you talk to Pruflas about?” (Alyssa)

“About new weapons and war devices.” (Hifumi)

“Eh?” (Alyssa)

Origa promptly replied to the question Alyssa muttered.

“Weapons to use we have to make in a hurry and planning the work for the inhabitants of the slums. It was a talk about what has to be constructed in preparation for the war.” (Origa)

We left together the first thing this morning, so why do you know this? Alyssa thought to herself. But except having a bad feeling about it, she didn't ask anything more.

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Just like what Origa for some reason knew, Hifumi had thrown a few new weapons into his dark magic storage.

While walking down the trashy street, he withdrew one of them.

It was three, 90 centimeter long iron rods, connected with chains. A so called three-section staff. Just like the chigiriki, it could be connected to become one long staff. But sadly, the mechanism in the

chigiriki had quickly broken, so it was made simpler in this weapon. In order to raise the deadliness of the staff, the metal ends were sharpened.

Breathing through his nose, and squinting his eyes because of the bright sun, Hifumi entered the slums, aimlessly wandering around its dirty streets, searching for any anyone's presence.

Suddenly, he stopped in front of an old house and kicked down the front door.

Stepping inside, he found a bearded old man lying down in the dark. The smell of alcohol filled the air.

"Ah, what's this?"

Whether he was drunk or just half-asleep, the old man's eyes were flickering around before Hifumi thrust the pointy end of his staff into the old man's throat.

"Ghue."

The old man died without making any sound.

Confirming that the staff's pointy end didn't break after hitting the neck bone, Hifumi was satisfied, as he went towards the next house.

As he disposed of a few more people in a similar way, making sure that the staff was easy to use, he saw a group of men gathered on the road. Upon sighting Hifumi, the men raised their weapons and

started shouting.

“Did you say you were going to deal with us, brat!?”

“Swinging around that weird stick, who do you think you are!?”

They look just like some countryside delinquents, Hifumi thought, as he let out a chuckle.

“I’m the Lord. It’s fine if you don’t remember that, though.” (Hifumi)

There were 8 of them.

Hifumi rushed over to the guy who spoke first, in the middle. With a swing like he was playing golf, he drove the staff into the other guy’s crotch.

With a sound like something was crushed, the guy died in shock.

“Hii....”

The man next to him let out a scream as he witnessed the scene.

Letting his hands go of the staff, Hifumi withdrew a jitte from his within his breast pocket. It wasn’t the cross kind, but rather the kind the policemen during the Edo period used. It was an about 30 centimeters long rod of iron, with a pointy end. As they didn’t have the right materials, there was no tassel, to Hifumi’s disappointment.

Thrusting the jitte in his right hand with an overhand grip, he intimidated the nearest guy.

“W-what will you do with such a short...”

While he was saying that, Hifumi stabbed the jitte into his kneecap, not given a chance to scream before his neck was snapped with a foot.

Hifumi deflected a sword incoming from the side with his right hand, before hitting the attacker’s chest like a hammer.

A dull vibrating sound was heard as the man dropped the sword, and feebly fell down on the ground.

Jumping towards one of the men who stepped back in fear, Hifumi thrust the jitte into his left eye, then using the handle in the left hand to send him flying with a hit to the

back of the head.

“3 guys left, huh?” (Hifumi)

“W-wait a second! I was opposed to this kind of... Hiii!”

“Shut up.” (Hifumi)

Closing in on the frightened man barehanded, Hifumi snatched his arm and pulled him down on the ground with his face down, before before strongly trampling down on the back of his head, crushing it.

As the man stopped moving after having his head crushed on the hard ground, Hifumi let go of his hand and pulled out his favourite kusarigama.

“Y-you beast!”

“Who’s a beast?” (Hifumi)

Shifting his position, Hifumi knocked down the desperately attacking man with his leg, ignoring him as he fell. Another person hesitatingly poising with a sword attacked, clinging to Hifumi, pushing him down.

“Geh.” (Hifumi)

The moment he was pushed down, Hifumi used his body weight to drive the sickle into the man’s heart, ending his life.

Looking at Hifumi slowly standing up having his face dyed red with blood stains, the fallen man wasn’t able to get up any more.

“W-waah…”

Being affected by the blood-soaked sickle held by Hifumi as he slowly approached, the man was frozen in fear.

Like he was cutting grass, Hifumi slashed with the sickle, and the last person died.

“Hmm....” (Hifumi)

Picking up the dropped weapons, Hifumi checked them all.

“Aah, it’s bent.” (Hifumi)

The jitte he had thrust through into an eye socket, piercing the cranium has some brain matter stuck to it, which he wiped off with some paper. Looking at it closely, it was slightly bent due to the impact when he struck with it.

“It really bent ... It was meant as a test, but I guess stuff like this happens.” (Hifumi)

Cleaning the weapons he used, and putting them away into the storage, Hifumi was hungry, so he left the slums to find a food stall to get some food. After eating, he returned to the slums, he aimlessly walked around until dusk, disposing of another 30 or so people.

They were mostly rash young men who had confidence in their skills, but none of them managed to even wound Hifumi.

In the time he continued the stroll of slaughtering while being bathed in blood, with the exception of the already broken jitte, he also tested

out the three-section staff several times. Since the basics of thrusting and also the basics of the katana's hassou, for such things as cutting at the lower leg and shaving off, were entirely on his regular practice menu, it flowed gently and was easy to use. (T/N: hassou is a kendo stance, as far as I understand it)

Having almost finished moving through the whole area of the slum, Hifumi felt a strong thirst for blood, as he took a step to the side.

With a sound of cutting through the air, an arrow lodged into the inside of a run-down house.

Turning around, a man was preparing to shoot another arrow. He was two meters tall, holding a

huge bow that he was drawing to the very limit.

Feeling happy about being ambushed, Hifumi displayed a smile as he drew his katana.

“So you’re the last one. With your huge frame, archery isn’t the only thing you’re good at, right?” (Hifumi)

The man looked at the club hanging on his waist, but without responding to the provocation, he aimed a second arrow at Hifumi.

With the katana in an underhand grip, Hifumi put the katana in front of him as he lowered his body. It was an old stance he was taught a long time ago by his master, which

was used against arrows. It was the first time he used it in actual combat, however.

(It's a stance limiting the area he can hit, then defending with the katana) (Hifumi)

Trying it out in reality, Hifumi was quite tense, so he deliberately relaxed his arm a bit.

Moving the katana on reflex, a broken arrow fell down by his feet with a dull sound.

"What!?"

As the man didn't think Hifumi would be able to knock down the arrow, he opened his eyes wide, not drawing another arrow.

Hifumi used that moment to shorten the distance, and just as if making a paint stroke, he slashed at the man with the katana. The man threw down his bow and made an evasive roll.

Doing that, the man grasped the one meter long wooden club at his waist and alertly put himself into position. As far as Hifumi was concerned, this was a satisfying opponent.

“Nice, nice. You’re different from those other idiots.” (Hifumi)

“... You’re a monster.”

Facing the loudly laughing Hifumi as he quickly changed the underhand grip on the katana to an

overhand one, the man made a bitter face.

“I’m just a normal person who put forth a great amount of effort.” (Hifumi)

If you asked 10 people who knew Hifumi, 15 would tell you otherwise.

The man was silent as he swung down the club, but Hifumi steadily retreated, avoiding the blow.

“And with a continuous motion!”

While the man was brandishing the club above his head, Hifumi slipped in below his stomach, and tackled the man with the shoulder, making him fall.

It made a dull sound, but the man

still unsteadily stood up.

“You’re quite sturdy, aren’t you?” (Hifumi)

“You and your strange movements……”

Cracking his neck with a flushed face, the man once again readied his club.

“You were alright with the bow, but the way you’re swinging the club is dull and boring. Don’t you have anything else?” (Hifumi)

“You!”

As the man approached with vehement vigor without affirming nor disagreeing, Hifumi started to get tired of him.

Hifumi then remembered something else Pruflas had prepared, and withdrew it from his storage, sprinkling it on the ground.

“Huh!? Aaaah!”

Stepping on the caltrops Hifumi had strewn out on the ground, with all of his might, the man couldn’t bear it and dropped the club, falling down on the ground.

“As expected, you couldn’t bear this.” (Hifumi)

Avoiding the caltrops covering the ground, Hifumi gently thrust the katana into the heart of the man, as he had fainted in agony.

“It was the first time I’ve used it, but it could be nice to use once in a

while. It reduces the tension, though." (Hifumi)

He gathered the scattered caltrops.

"... Gathering them is a pain ..." (Hifumi)

After collecting all of the caltrops and returning them to his dark magic storage, he realized he could've just opened a hole on the ground and directly collected them into his storage, and felt a bit sad about it, as he returned to the Lord's mansion.

Thus, the slums that had been a garbage heap in Fokalore since forever, had been emptied of inhabitants in just one day.

◆◇◆◇◆

Because Origa and the five slave civil officials put the gathered manpower from the slum to their best use, Fokalore quickly underwent a change.

Thanks to the manpower from the slums, the rails reaching Arosel had been finished, so they started testing it by sending goods and people.

The city's outer wall was also reinforced, and the entrances facing both royal capital, and the one facing Arosel were improved.

The women from the slums initially received a cold shoulder from the city's residents, but as they worked hard with cleaning up the city and collecting household garbage, the

inhabitants generally came to accept them.

Just being the feudal lord, Hifumi left all the decision making to the civil officials only making a rough draft for this project and occasionally confirming the progress. Alyssa also didn't approach the governmental operations excusing herself with the words 「I don't quite understand.」 The number provided to help out from the territorial army decreased as well as they were worked to death at combat training according to Hifumi's and Miyukare's instructions.

Naturally, as the style of receiving the instructions from Hifumi and

assigning the work following those became established for Origa, some amongst the residents misunderstood Origa to be Hifumi's wife. But there were also some thinking the feudal lord is a woman.

With Hifumi himself doing only the minimum of necessary document signing, his daily life basically started with finishing the morning practise and no sooner than after taking a hot bath he went missing without anyone noticing.

Today being the same, Hifumi vanished from his office going on a trip under the pretext of test running the arrival of the rail car at Arosel and eliminating the monsters along the highway on the

occasion.

“Today he is absent as well?” (Caim)

The civil official slave Caim, known for his notorious “impudence” amongst the staff members, muttered without a change in his expression seeing Kasha house-sitting in Hifumi’s office.

“Caim-san, huh? I came to this room right at the moment when he departed.” (Kasha)

“Can you do me favor of detaining him a bit? It would be a great help.” (Caim)

“Don’t ask the impossible.” (Kasha)

With a face where you didn’t know

whether he was laughing or crying, Caim left the office silently after looking at Kasha for a short while.

As if replacing him, Origa entered.

“Ara ...” (Origa)

Origa noticing there was no one but Kasha inside the room, she tried to leave the room right away, but Kasha stopped her by calling out to her.

“Origa, if it’s Hifumi-san you want to speak with, I can hear you out.” (Kasha)

Stopping her feet, Origa fixed her eyes on Kasha.

In difference to Caim, her face showed that she suppressed

something she wanted to say.

“... No. After Hifumi-sama has returned, I will tell him directly.” (Origa)

Then, Origa, who was about exit the room, once again stopped.

“Kasha, since you are a guard, even if only in name, how about doing a little bit of training? Because we can expect a large-scale battle with Vichy very soon going by the reports from the scouts, come and participate in the training to see how Alyssa has arranged the territorial army to move.” (Origa)

After spitting out in one go what she wanted to say, Origa left without delay.

“Battle, huh?” (Kasha)

There was a small magic tool within the pouch hanging on Kasha’s waist.

Although it was something simple, broken into two pieces and being separated from the other half, it was a quite expensive tool used for the purpose of communication in emergency.

According to the request she had received from Pajou, this half could be used to make Pajou aware of the situation in case Hifumi had been seriously injured or was in a critical state.

For the time being it was something with the purpose of come running

in case Hifumi was in danger with the ostensible reason of being able to search for him, but in reality it was obvious that the princess and Pajou intended to assassinate Hifumi in the confusion of the battle.

But, will it be only Hifumi that will die in the situation after using this?

Kasha stared at the door through which Origa left for a long time.

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